THE TRACER OF LOST PERSONS

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Edith L. Graves

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The TRACER of
LOST PERSONS

WORKS OF ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

THE TRACER OF LOST PERSONS
THE RECKONING
IOLE

Cardigan
The Maid at Arms
Lorraine
Maids of Paradise
Ashes of Empire
The Red Republic
The King in Yellow
A Maker of Moons
A King and a Few Dukes
The Conspirators
The Cambric Mask
The Haunts of Men
Outsiders
A Young Man in a Hurry
The Mystery of Choice
In Search of the Unknown
In the Quarter

FOR CHILDREN

Mountain-Land
Forest-Land
River-Land
Orchard-Land
Outdoorland

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK

The TRACER of LOST PERSONS

By R. W. Chambers

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TO

MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM A. HALL

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For the harmony of the world, like that of a harp, is made up of discords.

—HERACLITUS.

THE TRACER OF LOST PERSONS

CHAPTER I

He was thirty-three, agreeable to look at, equipped with as much culture and intelligence as is tolerated east of Fifth Avenue and west of Madison. He had a couple of elaborate rooms at the Lenox Club, a larger income than seemed to be good for him, and no profession. It follows that he was a pessimist before breakfast. Besides, it's a bad thing for a man at thirty-three to come to the conclusion that he has seen all the most attractive girls in the world and that they have been vastly overrated. So, when a club servant with gilt buttons on his coat tails knocked at the door, the invitation to enter was not very cordial. He of the buttons knocked again to take the edge off before he entered; then opened the door and unburdened himself as follows:

"Mr. Gatewood, sir, Mr. Kerns's compliments,

and wishes to know if 'e may 'ave 'is coffee served at your tyble, sir."

Gatewood, before the mirror, gave a vicious twist to his tie, inserted a pearl scarf pin, and regarded the effect with gloomy approval.

"Say to Mr. Kerns that I am—flattered," he replied morosely; "and tell Henry I want him."

"'Enry, sir? Yes, sir."

The servant left; one of the sleek club valets came in, softly sidling.

"Henry!"

"Sir?"

"I'll wear a white waistcoat, if you don't object."

The valet laid out half a dozen.

"Which one do you usually wear when I'm away, Henry? Which is *your* favorite?"

"Sir?"

"Pick it out and don't look injured, and *don't* roll up your eyes. I merely desire to borrow it for one day."

"Very good, sir."

"And, Henry, hereafter always help yourself to my *best* cigars. Those I smoke may injure you. I've attempted to conceal the keys, but you will, of course, eventually discover them under that loose tile on the hearth."

"Yes, sir; thanky', sir," returned the valet gravely.

"And—Henry!"

"Sir?" with martyred dignity.

"When you are tired of searching for my olivine and opal pin, just find it, for a change. I'd like to wear that pin for a day or two if it would not inconvenience you."

"Very good, sir; I will 'unt it hup, sir."

Gatewood put on his coat, took hat and gloves from the unabashed valet, and sauntered down to the sunny breakfast room, where he found Kerns inspecting a morning paper and leisurely consuming grapefruit with a cocktail on the side.

"Hullo," observed Kerns briefly.

"I'm not on the telephone," snapped Gatewood.

"I beg your pardon; how are you, dear friend?"

"*I* don't know how I am," retorted Gatewood irritably; "how the devil should a man know how he is?"

"Everything going to the bowwows, *as* usual, dear friend?"

"*As* usual. Oh, read your paper, Tommy! You know well enough I'm not one of those tail-wagging imbeciles who wakes up in the morning

singing like a half-witted lark. Why should I, with this taste in my mouth, and the laundress using vitriol, and Henry sneering at my cigars?" He yawned and cast his eyes toward the ceiling. "Besides, there's too much gilt all over this club! There's too much everywhere. Half the world is stucco, the rest rococo. Where's that Martini I bid for?"

Kerns, undisturbed, applied himself to cocoa and toasted muffins. Grapefruit and an amber-tinted accessory were brought for the other and sampled without mirth. However, a little later Gatewood said: "Well, are you going to read your paper all day?"

"What you need," said Kerns, laying the paper aside, "is a job—any old kind would do, dear friend."

"I don't want to make any more money."

"I don't want you to. I mean a job where you'd lose a lot and be scared into thanking Heaven for carfare. *You're* a nice object for the breakfast table!"

"Bridge. I will be amiable enough by noon time."

"Yes, you're endurable by noon time, as a rule. When you're forty you may be tolerated after five o'clock; when you're fifty your wife and children

might even venture to emerge from the cellar after dinner——"

"Wife!"

"I said wife," replied Kerns, as he calmly watched his man.

He had managed it well, so far, and he was wise enough not to overdo it. An interval of silence was what the situation required.

"I wish I *had* a wife," muttered Gatewood after a long pause.

"Oh, haven't you said that every day for five years? Wife! Look at the willing assortment of dreams playing Sally Waters around town. Isn't this borough a bower of beauty—a flowery thicket where the prettiest kind in all the world grow under glass or outdoors? And what do you do? You used to pretend to prowl about inspecting the yearly crop of posies, growling, cynical, dissatisfied; but you've even given that up. Now you only point your nose skyward and squall for a mate, and yowl mournfully that you never have seen your ideal. *I* know *you*."

"I never have seen my ideal," retorted Gatewood sulkily, "but I know she exists—somewhere between heaven and Hoboken."

"You're sure, are you?"

"Oh, *I'm* sure. And, rich or poor, good or bad,

she was fashioned for me alone. That's a theory of mine; *you* needn't accept it; in fact, it's none of your business, Tommy."

"All the same," insisted Kerns, "did you ever consider that if your ideal does exist somewhere, it is morally up to you to find her?"

"Haven't I inspected every débutante for ten years? You don't expect me to advertise for an ideal, do you—object, matrimony?"

Kerns regarded him intently. "Now, I'm going to make a vivid suggestion, Jack. In fact, that's why I subjected myself to the ordeal of breakfasting with you. It's none of my business, as you so kindly put it, but—*shall* I suggest something?"

"Go ahead," replied Gatewood, tranquilly lighting a cigarette. "I know what you'll say."

"No, you don't. Firstly, you are having such a good time in this world that you don't really enjoy yourself—isn't that so?"

"I—well I—well, let it go at that."

"Secondly, with all your crimes and felonies, you have one decent trait left: you really would like to fall in love. And I suspect you'd even marry."

"There are grounds," said Gatewood guardedly, "for your suspicions. *Et après?*"

"Good. Then there's a way! I know——"

"Oh, don't tell me you 'know a girl,' or anything like that!" began Gatewood sullenly. "I've heard that before, and I won't meet her."

"I don't want you to; I don't know anybody. All I desire to say is this: I do know a way. The other day I noticed a sign on Fifth Avenue:

KEEN & CO.
TRACERS OF LOST PERSONS

It was a most extraordinary sign; and having a little unemployed imagination I began to speculate on how Keen & Co. might operate, and I wondered a little, too, that the conditions of life in this city could enable a firm to make a living by devoting itself exclusively to the business of hunting up missing people."

Kerns paused, partly to light a cigarette, partly for diplomatic reasons.

"What has all this to do with me?" inquired Gatewood curiously; and diplomacy scored one.

"Why not try Keen & Co.?"

"Try them? Why? I haven't lost anybody, have I?"

"You haven't precisely *lost anybody*, but the fact remains that you can't *find somebody*," re-

turned Kerns coolly. "Why not employ Keen & Co. to look for her?"

"Look for whom, in Heaven's name?"

"Your ideal."

"Look for—for my ideal! Kerns, you're crazy. How the mischief can anybody hunt for somebody who doesn't exist?"

"You *say* that she *does* exist."

"But I can't prove it, man."

"You don't have to; it's up to Keen & Co. to prove it. That's why you employ them."

"What wild nonsense you talk! Keen & Co. might, perhaps, be able to trace the concrete, but how are they going to trace and find the abstract?"

"She isn't abstract; she is a lovely, healthy, and youthful concrete object—if, as you say, she *does* exist."

"How can I *prove* she exists?"

"You don't have to; they do that."

"Look here," said Gatewood almost angrily, "do you suppose that if I were ass enough to go to these people and tell them that I wanted to find my ideal——"

"*Don't* tell them *that!*"

"But how——"

"There is no necessity for going into such

trivial details. All you need say is: 'I am very anxious to find a young lady'—and then describe her as minutely as you please. Then, when they locate a girl of that description they'll notify you; you will go, judge for yourself whether she is the one woman on earth—and, if disappointed, you need only shake your head and murmur: 'Not *the* same!' And it's for them to find another."

"I won't do it!" said Gatewood hotly.

"Why not? At least, it would be amusing. You haven't many mental resources, and it might occupy you for a week or two."

Gatewood glared.

"You have a pleasant way of putting things this morning, haven't you?"

"I don't want to be pleasant: I want to jar you. Don't I care enough about you to breakfast with you? Then I've a right to be pleasantly unpleasant. I can't bear to watch your mental and spiritual dissolution—a man like you, with all your latent ability and capacity for being nobody in particular—which is the sort of man this nation needs. Do you want to turn into a club-window gazer like Van Bronk? Do you want to become another Courtlandt Allerton and go rocking down the avenue—a grimacing, tailor-made sepulcher? —the pompous obsequies of a dead intellect?—

a funeral on two wavering legs, carrying the corpse of all that should be deathless in a man? Why, Jack, I'd rather see you in bankruptcy—I'd rather see you trying to lead a double life in a single flat on seven dollars and a half a week—I'd almost rather see you every day at breakfast than have it come to that!

"Wake up and get jocund with life! Why, you could have all good citizens stung to death if you chose. It isn't that I want you to make money; but I want you to worry over somebody besides yourself—not in Wall Street—a pool and its money are soon parted. But in your own home, where a beautiful wife and seven angel children have you dippy and close to the ropes; where the housekeeper gets a rake off, and the cook is red-headed and comes from Sligo, and the butler's cousin will bear watching, and the chauffeur is a Frenchman, and the coachman's uncle is a Harlem vet, and every scullion in the establishment lies, drinks, steals, and supports twenty satiated relatives at your expense. That would mean the making of you; for, after all, Jack, you are no genius—you're a plain, non-partisan, uninspired, clean-built, wholesome citizen, thank God!—the sort whose unimaginative mission is to pitch in with eighty-odd millions of us and, like the busy coral

creatures, multiply with all your might, and make this little old Republic the greatest, biggest, finest article that an overworked world has ever yet put up! . . . Now you can call for help if you choose."

Gatewood's breath returned slowly. In an intimacy of many years he had never suspected that sort of thing from Kerns. That is why, no doubt, the opinions expressed by Kerns stirred him to an astonishment too innocent to harbor anger or chagrin.

And when Kerns stood up with an unembarrassed laugh, saying, "I'm going to the office; see you this evening?" Gatewod replied rather vacantly: "Oh, yes; I'm dining here. Good-by, Tommy."

Kerns glanced at his watch, lingering. "Was there anything you wished to ask me, Jack?" he inquired guilelessly.

"Ask you? No, I don't think so."

"Oh; I had an idea you might care to know where Keen & Co. were to be found."

"*That*," said Gatewood firmly, "is foolish."

"I'll write the address for you, anyway," rejoined Kerns, scribbling it and handing the card to his friend.

Then he went down the stairs, several at a time,

eased in conscience, satisfied that he had done his duty by a friend he cared enough for to breakfast with.

"Of course," he ruminated as he crawled into a hansom and lay back buried in meditation—"of course there may be nothing in this Keen & Co. business. But it will stir him up and set him thinking; and the longer Keen & Co. take to hunt up an imaginary lady that doesn't exist, the more anxious and impatient poor old Jack Gatewood will become, until he'll catch the fever and go cantering about with that one fixed idea in his head. And," added Kerns softly, "no New Yorker in his right mind can go galloping through these five boroughs very long before he's roped, tied, and marked by the 'only girl in the world'—the *only* girl—if you don't care to turn around and look at another million girls precisely like her. O Lord!—precisely like her!"

Here was a nice exhorter to incite others to matrimony.

CHAPTER II

Meanwhile, Gatewood was walking along Fifth Avenue, more or less soothed by the May sunshine. First, he went to his hatters, looked at straw hats, didn't like them, protested, and bought one, wishing he had strength of mind enough to wear it home. But he hadn't. Then he entered the huge white marble palace of his jeweler, left his watch to be regulated, caught a glimpse of a girl whose hair and neck resembled the hair and neck of his ideal, sidled around until he discovered that she was chewing gum, and backed off, with a bitter smile, into the avenue once more.

Every day for years he had had glimpses of girls whose hair, hands, figures, eyes, hats, carriage, resembled the features required by his ideal; there always was something wrong somewhere. And, as he strolled moodily, a curious feeling of despair seized him—something that, even in his most sentimental moments, even amid the most unexpected disappointment, he had never before experienced.

"I do want to love *somebody!*" he found him-

self saying half aloud; "I want to marry; I—" He turned to look after three pretty children with their maids—"I want several like those—several! —seven—ten—I don't care how many! I want a house to worry me, just as Tommy described it; I want to see the same girl across the breakfast table—or she can sip her cocoa in bed if she desires——" A slow, modest blush stole over his features; it was one of the nicest things he ever did. Glancing up, he beheld across the way a white sign, ornamented with strenuous crimson lettering:

KEEN & CO.
TRACERS OF LOST PERSONS

The moment he discovered it, he realized he had been covertly hunting for it; he also realized that he was going to climb the stairs. He hadn't quite decided what he meant to do after that; nor was his mind clear on the matter when he found himself opening a door of opaque glass on which was printed in red:

KEEN & CO.

He was neither embarrassed nor nervous when he found himself in a big carpeted anteroom where a negro attendant bowed him to a seat and

took his card; and he looked calmly around to see what was to be seen.

Several people occupied easy chairs in various parts of the room—an old woman very neatly dressed, clutching in her withered hand a photograph which she studied and studied with tear-dimmed eyes; a young man wearing last year's most fashionable styles in everything except his features: and soap could have aided him there; two policemen, helmets resting on their knees; and, last of all, a rather thin child of twelve, staring open-mouthed at everybody, a bundle of soiled clothing under one arm. Through an open door he saw a dozen young women garbed in black, with white cuffs and collars, all rattling away steadily at typewriters. Every now and then, from some hidden office, a bell rang decisively, and one of the girls would rise from her machine and pass noiselessly out of sight to obey the summons. From time to time, too, the darky servant with marvelous manners would usher somebody through the room where the typewriters were rattling, into the unseen office. First the old woman went—shakily, clutching her photograph; then the thin child with the bundle, staring at everything; then the two fat policemen, in portentous single file, helmets in their white-gloved hands, oiled hair glistening.

Gatewood's turn was approaching; he waited without any definite emotion, watching newcomers enter to take the places of those who had been summoned. He hadn't the slightest idea of what he was to say; nor did it worry him. A curious sense of impending good fortune left him pleasantly tranquil; he picked up, from the silver tray on the table at his elbow, one of the firm's business cards, and scanned it with interest:

KEEN & CO.
TRACERS OF LOST PERSONS

Keen & Co. are prepared to locate the whereabouts of anybody on earth. No charges will be made unless the person searched for is found.

Blanks on application.

WESTREL KEEN, *Manager.*

"Mistuh Keen will see you, suh," came a persuasive voice at his elbow; and he rose and followed the softly moving colored servant out of the room, through a labyrinth of demure young women at their typewriters, then sharply to the right and into a big, handsomely furnished office, where a sleepy-looking elderly gentleman rose from an armchair and bowed. There could not be the

slightest doubt that he *was* a gentleman; every movement, every sound he uttered, settled the fact.

"Mr. Keen?"

"Mr. Gatewood?" — with a quiet certainty which had its charm. "This is very good of you."

Gatewood sat down and looked at his host. Then he said: "I'm searching for somebody, Mr. Keen, whom you are not likely to find."

"I doubt it," said Keen pleasantly.

Gatewood smiled. "If," he said, "you will undertake to find the person *I* cannot find, I must ask you to accept a retainer."

"We don't require retainers," replied Keen. "Unless we find the person sought for, we make no charges, Mr. Gatewood."

"I must ask you to do so in my case. It is not fair that you should undertake it on other terms. I desire to make a special arrangement with you. Do you mind?"

"What arrangement had you contemplated?" inquired Keen, amused.

"Only this: charge me in advance exactly what you would charge if successful. And, on the other hand, do not ask me for detailed information —I mean, do not insist on any information that I decline to give. Do you mind taking up such

an extraordinary and unbusinesslike proposition, Mr. Keen?"

The Tracer of Lost Persons looked up sharply:

"About how much information *do* you decline to give, Mr. Gatewood?"

"About enough to incriminate and degrade," replied the young man, laughing.

The elderly gentleman sat silent, apparently buried in meditation. Once or twice his pleasant steel-gray eyes wandered over Gatewood as an expert, a connoisseur, glances at a picture and assimilates its history, its value, its artistic merit, its every detail in one practiced glance.

"I think we may take up this matter for you, Mr. Gatewood," he said, smiling his singularly agreeable smile.

"But—but you would first desire to know something about me—would you not?"

Keen looked at him: "You will not mistake me—you will consider it entirely inoffensive—if I say that I know something about you, Mr. Gatewood?"

"About *me?* How can you? Of course, there is the social register and the club lists and all that——"

"And many, many sources of information which are necessary in such a business as this, Mr. Gate-

wood. It is a necessity for us to be almost as well informed as our clients' own lawyers. I could pay you no sincerer compliment than to undertake your case. I am half inclined to do so even *without* a retainer. Mind, I haven't yet said that I *will* take it."

"I prefer to regulate any possible indebtedness in advance," said Gatewood.

"As you wish," replied the older man, smiling. "In that case, suppose you draw your check" (he handed Gatewood a fountain pen as the young man fished a check-book from his pocket)—"your check for—well, say for $5,000, to the order of Keen & Co."

Gatewood met his eye without wincing; he was in for it now; and he was always perfectly game. He had brought it upon himself; it was his own proposition. Not that he would have for a moment considered the sum as high—or any sum exorbitant—if there had been a chance of success; one cannot compare and weigh such matters. But how could there be any chance for success?

As he slowly smoothed out the check and stub, pen poised, Keen was saying: "Of course, we should succeed sooner or later—if we took up your case. We might succeed to-morrow — to-day. That would mean a large profit for us. But we

might not succeed to-day, or next month, or even next year. That would leave us little or no profit; and, as it is our custom to go on until we do succeed, no matter how long it may require, you see, Mr. Gatewood, I should be taking all sorts of chances. It might even cost us double your retainer before we found her——"

"Her? How did—*why* do you say '*her*'?"

"Am I wrong?" asked Keen, smiling.

"No—you are right."

The Tracer of Lost Persons sank into abstraction again. Gatewood waited, hoping that his case might be declined, yet ready to face any music started at his own request.

"She is young," mused Keen aloud, "very beautiful and accomplished. *Is* she wealthy?" He looked up mildly.

Gatewood said: "I don't know—the truth is I don't care——" And stopped.

"O-ho!" mused Keen slowly. "I—think—I understand. Am I wrong, Mr. Gatewood, in surmising that this young lady whom you seek is, in your eyes, very—I may say ideally gifted?"

"She is my ideal," replied the young man, coloring.

"*Ex*actly. And—her general allure?"

"Charming!"

"*Ex*actly; but to be a trifle more precise—if you could give me a sketch, an idea, a mere outline delicately tinted, now. *Is* she more blond than brunette?"

"Yes—but her eyes are brown. I—I insist on that."

"Why should you not? *You* know her; I don't," said Keen, laughing. "I merely wished to form a mental picture. . . . You say her hair is —is——"

"It's full of sunny color; that's all I can say."

"*Ex*actly—I see. A rare and lovely combination with brown eyes and creamy skin, Mr. Gatewood. I fancy she might be, perhaps, an inch or two under your height?"

"Just about that. Her hands should be—*are* beautiful——"

"*Ex*actly. The ensemble is most vividly portrayed, Mr. Gatewood; and—you have intimated that her lack of fortune—er—we might almost say her pecuniary distress—is more than compensated for by her accomplishments, character, and very unusual beauty. . . . *Did* I so understand you, Mr. Gatewood?"

"That's what I meant, anyhow," he said, flushing up.

"You *did* mean it?"

"I did: I do."

"Then we take your case, Mr. Gatewood. . . . No haste about the check, my dear sir—pray consider us at your service."

But Gatewood doggedly filled in the check and handed it to the Tracer of Lost Persons.

"I wish you happiness," said the older man in a low voice. "The lady you describe exists; it is for us to discover her."

"Thank you," stammered Gatewood, astounded.

Keen touched an electric button; a moment later a young girl entered the room.

"Miss Southerland, Mr. Gatewood. Will you be kind enough to take Mr. Gatewood's dictation in Room 19?"

For a second Gatewood stared—as though in the young girl before him the ghost of his ideal had risen to confront him—only for a second; then he bowed, matching her perfect acknowledgment of his presence by a bearing and courtesy which must have been inbred to be so faultless.

And he followed her to Room 19.

What had Keen meant by saying, "The lady you describe exists!" Did this remarkable elderly gentleman suspect that it was to be a hunt for an ideal? Had he deliberately entered into such a bargain? Impossible!

His disturbed thoughts reverted to the terms of the bargain, the entire enterprise, the figures on his check. His own amazing imbecility appalled him. What idiocy! What sudden madness had seized him to entangle himself in such unheard-of negotiations! True, he had played bridge until dawn the night before, but, on awaking, he had discovered no perceptible hold-over. It must have been sheer weakness of intellect that permitted him to be dominated by the suggestions of Kerns. And now the game was on: the jack declared, cards dealt, and his ante was up. Had he openers?

Room 19, duly labeled with its number on the opaque glass door, contained a desk, a table and typewriter, several comfortable chairs, and a window opening on Fifth Avenue, through which the eastern sun poured a stream of glory, washing curtain, walls, and ceiling with palest gold.

And all this time, preoccupied with new impressions and his own growing chagrin, he watched the girl who conducted him with all the unconscious assurance and grace of a young chatelaine passing through her own domain under escort of a distinguished guest.

When they had entered Room 19, she half turned, but he forestalled her and closed the door,

and she passed before him with a perceptible inclination of her finely modeled head, seating herself at the desk by the open window. He took an armchair at her elbow and removed his gloves, looking at her expectantly.

CHAPTER III

"THIS is a list of particular and general questions for you to answer, Mr. Gatewood," she said, handing him a long slip of printed matter. "The replies to such questions as you are able or willing to answer you may dictate to me." The beauty of her modulated voice was scarcely a surprise—no woman who moved and carried herself as did this tall young girl in black and white could reasonably be expected to speak with less distinction—yet the charm of her voice, from the moment her lips unclosed, so engrossed him that the purport of her speech escaped him.

"Would you mind saying it once more?" he asked.

She did so; he attempted to concentrate his attention, and succeeded sufficiently to look as though some vestige of intellect remained in him. He saw her pick up a pad and pencil; the contour and grace of two deliciously fashioned hands arrested his mental process once more.

"I *beg* your pardon," he said hastily; "what were you saying, Miss Southerland?"

"Nothing, Mr. Gatewood. I did not speak."

And he realized, hazily, that she had not spoken —that it was the subtle eloquence of her youth and loveliness that had appealed like a sudden voice—a sound faintly exquisite echoing his own thought of her.

Troubled, he looked at the slip of paper in his hand; it was headed:

SPECIAL DESCRIPTION BLANK
(*Form K*)

And he read it as carefully as he was able to—the curious little clamor of his pulses, the dazed sense of elation, almost of expectation, distracting his attention all the time.

"I wish you would read it to me," he said; "that would give me time to think up answers."

"If you wish," she assented pleasantly, swinging around toward him in her desk chair. Then she crossed one knee over the other to support the pad, and, bending above it, lifted her brown eyes. She could have done nothing in the world more distracting at that moment.

"What is the sex of the person you desire to find, Mr. Gatewood?"

"Her sex? I—well, I fancy it is feminine."

She wrote after "Sex" the words "She is

probably feminine"; looked at him absently, glanced at what she had written, flushed a little, rubbed out the "she is probably," wondering why a moment's mental wandering should have committed her to absurdity.

"Married?" she asked with emphasis.

"No," he replied, startled; then, vexed, "I beg your pardon—you mean to ask if *she* is married!"

"Oh, I didn't mean *you*, Mr. Gatewood; it's the next question, you see"—she held out the blank toward him. "Is the person you are looking for married?"

"Oh, no; she isn't married, either—at least—I trust—not—because if she *is* I don't want to find her!" he ended, entangled in an explanation which threatened to involve him deeper than he desired. And, looking up, he saw the beautiful brown eyes regarding him steadily. They reverted to the paper at once, and the white fingers sent the pencil flying.

"He trusts that she is unmarried, but if she *is* (underlined) married he doesn't want to find her," she wrote.

"That," she explained, "goes under the head of 'General Remarks' at the bottom of the page"—she held it out, pointing with her pencil. He nodded, staring at her slender hand.

"Age?" she continued, setting the pad firmly on her rounded, yielding knee and looking up at him.

"Age? Well, I—as a matter of fact, I could only venture a surmise. You know," he said earnestly, "how difficult it is to guess ages, don't you, Miss Southerland?"

"How old do you *think* she is? Could you not hazard a guess—judging, say, from her appearance?"

"I have no data—no experience to guide me." He was becoming involved again. "Would you, for practice, permit me first to guess your age, Miss Southerland?"

"Why—yes—if you think that might help you to guess hers."

So he leaned back in his armchair and considered her a very long time—having a respectable excuse to do so. Twenty times he forgot he was looking at her for any purpose except that of disinterested delight, and twenty times he remembered with a guilty wince that it was a matter of business.

"Perhaps I had better tell you," she suggested, her color rising a little under his scrutiny.

"Is it eighteen? Just *her* age!"

"Twenty-one, Mr. Gatewood—and you *said* you didn't know her age."

"I have just remembered that I *thought* it might be eighteen; but I dare say I was shy three years in her case, too. You may put it down at twenty-one."

For the slightest fraction of a second the brown eyes rested on his, the pencil hovered in hesitation. Then the eyes fell, and the moving fingers wrote.

"Did you write 'twenty-one'?" he inquired carelessly.

"I did not, Mr. Gatewood."

"What did you write?"

"I wrote: 'He doesn't appear to know much about her age.'"

"But I *do* know——"

"You said——" They looked at one another earnestly.

"The next question," she continued with composure, "is: 'Date and place of birth?' Can you answer any part of *that* question?"

"I trust I may be able to—some day. . . . What *are* you writing?"

"I'm writing: 'He trusts he may be able to, some day.' Wasn't that what you said?"

"Yes, I did say that. I—I'm not perfectly sure what I meant by it."

She passed to the next question:

"Height?"

"About five feet six," he said, fascinated gaze on her.

"Hair?"

"More gold than brown — full of — er — gleams——" She looked up quickly; his eyes reverted to the window rather suddenly. He had been looking at her hair.

"Complexion?" she continued after a shade of hesitation.

"It's a sort of delicious mixture—bisque, tinted with a pinkish bloom—ivory and rose——" He was explaining volubly, when she began to shake her head, timing each shake to his words.

"Really, Mr. Gatewood, I think you are hopelessly vague on that point—unless you desire to convey the impression that she is speckled."

"Speckled!" he repeated, horrified. "Why, I am describing a woman who is my ideal of beauty——"

But she had already gone to the next question:

"Teeth?"

"P-p-perfect p-p-pearls!" he stammered. The laughing red mouth closed like a flower at dusk, veiling the sparkle of her teeth.

Was he trying to be impertinent? Was he de-

liberately describing her? He did not look like that sort of man; yet *why* was he watching her so closely, so curiously at every question? Why did he look at her teeth when she laughed?

"Eyes?" Her own dared him to continue what, coincidence or not, was plainly a description of herself.

"B-b-b——" He grew suddenly timorous, hesitating, pretending to a perplexity which was really a healthy scare. For she was frowning.

"Curious I can't think of the color of her eyes," he said; "is—isn't it?"

She coldly inspected her pad and made a correction; but all she did was to rub out a comma and put another in its place. Meanwhile, Gatewood, chin in his hand, sat buried in profound thought. "*Were* they blue?" he murmured to himself aloud, "or *were* they brown? Blue begins with a *b* and brown begins with a *b*. I'm convinced that her eyes began with a *b*. They were not, therefore, gray or green, because," he added in a burst of confidence, "it is utterly impossible to spell gray or green with a *bl*"

Miss Southerland looked slightly astonished.

"All you can recollect, then, is that the color of her eyes began with the letter *b*?"

"That is absolutely all I can remember; but I *think* they *were*—brown."

"If they *were* brown they must be brown now," she observed, looking out of the window.

"That's true! Isn't it curious I never thought of that? What are you writing?"

"Brown," she said, so briefly that it sounded something like a snub.

"Mouth?" inquired the girl, turning a new leaf on her pad.

"Perfect. Write it: there is no other term fit to describe its color, shape, its sensitive beauty, its—— *What* did you write just then?"

"I wrote, 'Mouth, ordinary.'"

"I don't want you to! I want——"

"Really, Mr. Gatewood, a rhapsody on a girl's mouth is proper in poetry, but scarcely germane to the record of a purely business transaction. Please answer the next question tersely, if you don't mind: 'Figure?'"

"Oh, I *do* mind! I can't! Any poem is much too brief to describe her figure——"

"Shall we say 'Perfect'?" asked the girl, raising her brown eyes in a glimmering transition from vexation to amusement. For, after all, it could be *only* a coincidence that this young man should be describing features peculiar to herself.

"Couldn't you write, 'Venus-of-Milo-like'?" he inquired. "That is laconic."

"I could—if it's true. But if you mean it for praise—I—don't think any modern woman would be flattered."

"I always supposed that she of Milo had an ideal figure," he said, perplexed.

She wrote, "A good figure." Then, propping her rounded chin on one lovely white hand, she glanced at the next question:

"Hands?"

"White, beautiful, rose-tipped, slender yet softly and firmly rounded——"

"How *can* they be soft and firm, too, Mr. Gatewood?" she protested; then, surprising his guilty eyes fixed on her hands, hastily dropped them and sat up straight, level-browed, cold as marble. *Was* he deliberately being rude to her?

CHAPTER IV

As a matter of fact, he was not. Too poor in imagination to invent, on the spur of the moment, charms and qualities suited to his ideal, he had, at first unconsciously, taken as a model the girl before him; quite unconsciously and innocently at first—then furtively, and with a dawning perception of the almost flawless beauty he was secretly plagiarizing. Aware, now, that something had annoyed her; aware, too, at the same moment that there appeared to be nothing lacking in her to satisfy his imagination of the ideal, he began to turn redder than he had ever turned in all his life.

Several minutes of sixty seconds each ensued before he ventured to stir a finger. And it was only when she bent again very gravely over her pad that he cautiously eased a cramped muscle or two, and drew a breath—a long, noiseless, deep and timid respiration. He realized the enormity of what he had been doing—how close he had come to giving unpardonable offense by drawing a perfect portrait of her as the person he desired to find through the good offices of Keen & Co.

But there was no such person—unless she had a double: for what more could a man desire than the ideal traits he had been able to describe only by using her as his inspiration.

When he ventured to look at her, one glance was enough to convince him that she, too, had noticed the parallel—had been forced to recognize her own features in the portrait he had constructed of an ideal. And she had caught him in absent-minded contemplation of the hands he had been describing. He knew that his face was the face of a guilty man.

"What is the next question?" he stammered, eager to answer it in a manner calculated to allay her suspicions.

"The next question?" She glanced at the list, then with a voice of velvet which belied the eyes, clear as frosty brown pools in November: "The next question requires a description of her feet."

"Feet! Oh—they—they're rather large——why, her feet are enormous, I believe——"

She looked at him as though stunned; suddenly a flood of pink spread, wave on wave, from the white nape of her neck to her hair; she bent low over her pad and wrote something, remaining in that attitude until her face cooled.

"Somehow or other I've done it again!" he

thought, horrified. "The best thing I can do is to end it and go home."

In his distress he began to hedge, saying: "Of course, she is rather tall and her feet are in some sort of proportion—in fact, they are perfectly symmetrical feet——"

Never in his life had he encountered a pair of such angrily beautiful eyes. Speech stopped with a dry gulp.

"We now come to 'General Remarks,'" she said in a voice made absolutely steady and emotionless. "Have you any remarks of that description to offer, Mr. Gatewood?"

"I'm willing to make remarks," he said, "if I only knew what you wished me to say."

She mused, eyes on the sunny window, then looked up. "Where did you last see her?"

"Near Fifth Avenue."

"And what street?"

He named the street.

"Near *here?*"

"Rather," he said timidly.

She ruffled the edges of her pad, wrote something and erased it, bit her scarlet upper lip, and frowned.

"Out of doors, of course?"

"No; indoors," he admitted furtively.

She looked up with a movement almost nervous.

"Do you dare—I mean, care—to be more concise?"

"I would rather not," he replied in a voice from which he hoped he had expelled the tremors of alarm.

"As you please, Mr. Gatewood. And would you care to answer any of these other questions: Who and what are or were her parents? Give all particulars concerning all her relatives. Is she employed or not? What are her social, financial, and general circumstances? Her character, personal traits, aims, interests, desires? Has she any vices? Any virtues? Talents? Ambitions? Caprices? Fads? Are you in love with her? Is——"

"Yes," he said, "I am."

"Is she in love with you?"

"No; she hates me—I'm afraid."

"Is she in love with anybody?"

"That is a very difficult——"

The girl wrote: "He doesn't know," with a satisfaction apparently causeless.

"Is she a relative of yours, Mr. Gatewood?" very sweetly.

"No, Miss Southerland," very positively.

"You—you desire to marry her—you say?"

"I do. But I didn't say it."

She was silent; then:

"What is her name?" in a low voice which started several agreeable thrills chasing one another over him.

"I—I decline to answer," he stammered.

"On what grounds, Mr. Gatewood?"

He looked her full in the eyes; suddenly he bent forward and gazed at the printed paper from which she had been apparently reading.

"Why, all those questions you are scaring me with are not there!" he exclaimed indignantly. "You are making them up?"

"I—I know, but"—she was flushing furiously—"but they are on the other forms—some of them. Can't you see you are answering 'Form K'? That is a special form——"

"But why do you ask me questions that are *not* on Form K?"

"Because it is my duty to do all I can to secure evidence which may lead to the discovery of the person you desire to find. I—I assure you, Mr. Gatewood, this duty is not—not always agreeable—and some people make it harder still."

Gatewood looked out of the window. Various emotions—among them shame, mortification, chagrin—pervaded him, and chased each other along

his nervous system, coloring his neck and ears a fiery red for the enlightenment of any observer.

"I—I did not mean to offend you," said the girl in a low voice—such a gently regretful voice that Gatewood swung around in his chair.

"There is nothing I would not be glad to tell you about the woman I have fallen in love with," he said. "She is overwhelmingly lovely; and—when I dare—I will tell you her name and where I first saw her—and where I saw her last—if you desire. Shall I?"

"It would be advisable. When will you do this?"

"When I dare."

"You—you don't dare—now?"

"No . . . not now."

She absently wrote on her pad: "He doesn't dare tell me now." Then, with head still bent, she lifted her mischief-making, trouble-breeding brown eyes to his once more.

"I am to come here, of course, to consult you?" he asked dizzily.

"Mr. Keen will receive you——"

"He may be busy."

"He may be," she repeated dreamily.

"So—I'll ask for you."

"We *could* write you, Mr. Gatewood."

He said hastily: "It's no trouble for me to come; I walk every morning."

"But there would be no use, I think, in your coming very soon. All I—all Mr. Keen could do for a while would be to report progress——"

"That is all I dare look for: progress—for the present."

During the time that he remained—which was not very long—neither of them spoke until he arose to take his departure.

"Good-by, Miss Southerland. I hope you may find the person I have been searching for."

"Good-by, Mr. Gatewood. . . . I hope we shall; . . . but I—don't—know."

And, as a matter of fact, she did not know; she was rather excited over nothing, apparently; and also somewhat preoccupied with several rather disturbing emotions the species of which she was interested in determining. But to label and catalogue each of these emotions separately required privacy and leisure to think—and she also wished to look very earnestly at the reflection of her own face in the mirror of her own chamber. For it is a trifle exciting—though but an innocent coincidence—to be compared, feature by feature, to a young man's ideal. As far as that went, she excelled it, too; and, as she stood by the desk, alone,

gathering up her notes, she suddenly bent over and lifted the hem of her gown a trifle—sufficient to reassure herself that the dainty pair of shoes she wore, would have baffled the efforts of any Venus ever sculptured. And she was perfectly right.

"Of course," she thought to herself, "his ideal runaway hasn't enormous feet. He, too, must have been struck with the similarity between me and his ideal, and when he realized that I also noticed it, he was frightened by my frown into saying that her feet were enormous. How silly! . . . For I didn't *mean* to frighten him. . . . He frightened me—once or twice—I mean he irritated me—no, interested me, is what I *do* mean. . . . Heigho! I wonder why she ran away? I wonder why he can't find her? . . . It's—it's silly to run away from a man like that. . . . Heigho! . . . She doesn't deserve to be found. There is nothing to be afraid of—nothing to alarm anybody in a man like that."

So she gathered up her notes and walked slowly out and across to the private office of the Tracer of Lost Persons.

"Come in," said the Tracer when she knocked. He was using the telephone; she seated herself rather listlessly beside the window, where spring

sunshine lay in gilded patches on the rug and spring breezes stirred the curtains. She was a little tired, but there seemed to be no good reason why. Yet, with the soft wind blowing on her cheek, the languor grew; she rested her face on one closed hand, shutting her eyes.

When they opened again it was to meet the fixed gaze of Mr. Keen.

"Oh—I beg your pardon!"

"There is no need of it, child. Be seated. Never mind that report just now." He paced the length of the room once or twice, hands clasped behind him; then, halting to confront her:

"What sort of a man is this young Gatewood?"

"What *sort*, Mr. Keen? Why—I think he is the—the sort—that——"

"I see that you don't think much of him," said Keen, laughing.

"Oh, indeed I did not mean that at all; I mean that he appeared to be—to be——"

"Rather a cad?"

"Why, *no!*" she said, flushing up. "He is absolutely well-bred, Mr. Keen."

"You received no unpleasant impression of him?"

"On the contrary!" she said rather warmly—

for it hurt her sense of justice that Keen should so misjudge even a stranger in whom she had no personal interest.

"You think he looks like an honest man?"

"Honest?" She was rosy with annoyance. "Have you any idea that he is dishonest?"

"Have you?"

"Not the slightest," she said with emphasis.

"Suppose a man should set us hunting for a person who does not exist—on our terms, which are no payment unless successful? Would that be honest?" asked Keen gravely.

"Did—did *he* do that?"

"No, child."

"I knew he *couldn't* do such a thing!"

"No, he — er — couldn't, because I wouldn't allow it—not that he tried to!" added Keen hastily as the indignant brown eyes sparkled ominously. "Really, Miss Southerland, he must be all you say he is, for he has a stanch champion to vouch for him."

"All I *say* he is? I haven't said anything about him!"

Mr. Keen nodded. "*Ex*actly. Let us drop him for a moment. . . . Are you perfectly well, Miss Southerland?"

"Why, yes."

"I'm glad of it. You are a trifle pale; you seem to be a little languid. . . . When do you take your vacation?"

"You suggested May, I believe," she said wistfully.

The Tracer leaned back in his chair, joining the tips of his fingers reflectively.

"Miss Southerland," he said, "you have been with us a year. I thought it might interest you to know that I am exceedingly pleased with you."

She colored charmingly.

"But," he added, "I'm terribly afraid we're going to lose you."

"Why?" she asked, startled.

"However," he continued, ignoring her half-frightened question with a smile, "I am going to promote you—for faithful and efficient service."

"O-h!"

"With an agreeable increase of salary, and new duties which will take you into the open air. . . . You ride?"

"I—I used to before——"

"*Ex*actly; before you were obliged to earn your living. Please have yourself measured for habit and boots this afternoon. I shall arrange for horse, saddle, and groom. You will spend

most of your time riding in the Park—for the present."

"But—Mr. Keen—am I to be one of your agents—a sort of detective?"

Keen regarded her absently, then crossed one leg over the other.

"Read me your notes," he said with a smile.

She read them, folded them, and he took them from her, thoughtfully regarding her.

"Did you know that your mother and I were children together?" he asked.

"No!" She stared. "Is *that* why you sent for me that day at the school of stenography?"

"That is why. . . . When I learned that my playmate—your mother—was dead, is it not reasonable to suppose that I should wish her daughter to have a chance?"

Miss Southerland looked at him steadily.

"She was like you—when she married. . . . I never married. . . . Do you wonder that I sent for you, child?"

Nothing but the clock ticking there in the sunny room, and an old man staring into two dimmed brown eyes, and the little breezes at the open window whispering of summers past.

"This young man, Gatewood," said the Tracer, clearing his voice of its hoarseness—"this young

man ought to be all right, if I did not misjudge his father—years ago, child, years ago. And he *is* all right——" He half turned toward a big letter-file; "his record is clean, so far. The trouble with him is idleness. He ought to marry."

"Isn't he trying to?" she asked.

"It looks like it. Miss Southerland, we *must* find this woman!"

"Yes, but I don't see how you are going to—on such slight information——"

"Information! Child, I have all I want—all I could desire." He laughed, passing his hands over his gray hair. "We are going to find the girl he is in love with before the week ends!"

"Do you really think so?" she exclaimed.

"Yes. But you must do a great deal in this case."

"I?"

"*Ex*actly."

"And—and what am I to do?"

"Ride in the Park, child! And if you see Mr. Gatewood, don't you dare take your eyes off him for one moment. Watch him; observe everything he does. If he should recognize you and speak to you, be as amiable to him as though it were not by my orders."

"Then—then I *am* to be a detective!" she faltered.

The Tracer did not appear to hear her. He took up the notes, turned to the telephone, and began to send out a general alarm, reading the description of the person whom Gatewood had described. The vast, intricate and delicate machinery under his control was being set in motion all over the Union.

"Not that I expect to find her outside the borough of Manhattan," he said, smiling, as he hung up the receiver and turned to her; "but it's as well to know how many types of that species exist in this Republic, and who they are—in case any other young man comes here raving of brown eyes and 'gleams' in the hair."

Miss Southerland, to her own intense consternation, blushed.

"I think you had better order that habit at once," said the Tracer carelessly.

"Tell me, Mr. Keen," she asked tremulously, "am I to spy upon Mr. Gatewood? And report to you? . . . For I simply cannot bear to do it——"

"Child, you need report nothing unless you desire to. And when there is something to report, it will be about the woman I am searching for.

Don't you understand? I have already located her. You will find her in the Park. And when you are *sure* she is the right one—and if you care to report it to me—I shall be ready to listen. . . . I am always ready to listen to you."

"But—I warn you, Mr. Keen, that I have perfect faith in the honor of Mr. Gatewood. I *know* that I could have nothing unworthy to report."

"I am sure of it," said the Tracer of Lost Persons, studying her with eyes that were not quite clear. "Now, I think you had better order that habit. . . . Your mother sat her saddle perfectly. . . . We rode very often—my lost playmate and I."

He turned, hands clasped behind his back, absently pacing the room, backward, forward, there in the spring sunshine. Nor did he notice her lingering, nor mark her as she stole from the room, brown eyes saddened and thoughtful, wondering, too, that there should be in the world so much room for sorrow.

"'I am sure of it,' said the Tracer of Lost Persons."

CHAPTER V

Gatewood, burdened with restlessness and gnawed by curiosity, consumed a week in prowling about the edifice where Keen & Co. carried on an interesting profession.

His first visit resulted merely in a brief interview with Mr. Keen, who smilingly reported progress and suavely bowed him out. He looked about for Miss Southerland as he was leaving, but did not see her.

On his second visit he mustered the adequate courage to ask for her, and experienced a curiously sickly sensation when informed that Miss Southerland was no longer employed in the bureau of statistics, having been promoted to an outside position of great responsibility. His third visit proved anything but satisfactory. He sidled and side-stepped for ten minutes before he dared ask Mr. Keen *where* Miss Southerland had gone. And when the Tracer replied that, considering the business he had undertaken for Mr. Gatewood, he really could not see why Mr. Gatewood should in-

terest himself concerning the whereabouts of Miss Southerland, the young man had nothing to say, and escaped as soon as possible, enraged at himself, at Mr. Keen, and vaguely holding the entire world guilty of conspiracy.

He had no definite idea of what he wanted, except that his desire to see Miss Southerland again seemed out of all proportion to any reasonable motive for seeing her. Occasional fits of disgust with himself for what he had done were varied with moody hours of speculation. Suppose Mr. Keen did find his ideal? What of it? He no longer wanted to see her. He had no use for her. The savor of the enterprise had gone stale in his mouth; he was by turns worried, restless, melancholy, sulky, uneasy. A vast emptiness pervaded his life. He smoked more and more and ate less and less. He even disliked to see others eat, particularly Kerns.

And one exquisite May morning he came down to breakfast and found the unspeakable Kerns immersed in grapefruit, calm, well balanced, and bland.

"How-de-dee, dear friend?" said that gentleman affably. "Any news from Cupid this beautiful May morning?"

"No; and I don't want any," returned Gate-

wood, sorting his mail with a scowl and waving away his fruit.

"Tut, tut! Lovers must be patient. Dearie will be found some day——"

"Some day," snarled Gatewood, "I shall destroy you, Tommy."

"Naughty! Naughty!" reflected Kerns, pensively assaulting the breakfast food. "Lovey must *not* worry; Dovey shall be found, and all will be joy and gingerbread. . . . If you throw that orange I'll run screaming to the governors. Aren't you ashamed—just because you're in a love tantrum!"

"One more word and you get it!"

"May I sing as I trifle with this frugal fare, dear friend? My heart is *so* happy that I should love to warble a few wild notes——"

He paused to watch his badgered victim dispose of a Martini.

"I wonder," he mused, "if you'd like me to tell you what a cocktail before breakfast does to the lining of your stomach? Would you?"

"No. I suppose it's what the laundress does to my linen. What do I care?"

"*Don't* be a short sport, Jack."

"Well, I don't care for the game you put me up against. Do you know what has happened?"

"I really don't, dear friend. The Tracer of Lost Persons has not found her—*has* he?"

"He says he has," retorted Gatewood sullenly, pulling a crumpled telegram from his pocket and casting it upon the table. "I don't want to see her; I'm not interested. I never saw but one girl in my life who interested me in the slightest; and she's employed to help in this ridiculous search."

Kerns, meanwhile, had smoothed out the telegram and was intently perusing it:

"*John Gatewood, Lenox Club, Fifth Avenue:*

"Person probably discovered. Call here as soon as possible. W. KEEN."

"*What* do you make of that?" demanded Gatewood hoarsely.

"Make of it? Why, it's true enough, I fancy. Go and see, and if it's she, be hers!"

"I won't! I don't want to see any ideal! I don't want to marry. Why do you try to make me marry somebody?"

"Because it's good for you, dear friend. Otherwise you'll go to the doggy-dogs. You don't realize how much worry you are to me."

"Confound it! Why don't *you* marry? Why didn't I ask you that when you put me up to all this foolishness? What right have you to——"

"Tut, friend! *I* know there's no woman alive fit to wed me and spend her life in stealing kisses from me. *I* have no ideal. *You* have an ideal."

"I haven't!"

"Oh, yes, dear friend, there's a stub in your check book to prove it. You simply bet $5,000 that your ideal existed. You've won. Go and be her joy and sunshine."

"I'll put an end to this whole business," said Gatewood wrathfully, "and I'll do it now!"

"Bet you that you're engaged within the week!" said Kerns with a placid smile.

The other swung around savagely: "What will you bet, Tommy? You may have what odds you please. I'll make you sit up for this."

"I'll bet you," answered Kerns, deliberately, "an entire silver dinner service against a saddle horse for the bride."

"That's a fool bet!" snapped Gatewood. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, if you don't care to——"

"What do I want of a silver service? But, all right; I'll bet you anything."

"*She'll* want it," replied Kerns significantly, booking the bet. "I may as well canter out to Tiffany's this morning, I fancy. . . . Where are you going, Jack?"

"To see Keen and confess what an ass I've been!" returned Gatewood sullenly, striding across the breakfast room to take his hat and gloves from the rack. And out he went, mad all over.

On his way up the avenue he attempted to formulate the humiliating confession which already he shrank from. But it had to be done. He simply could not stand the prospect of being notified month after month that a lady would be on view somewhere. It was like going for a fitting; it was horrible. Besides, what use was it? Within a week or two an enormous and utterly inexplicable emptiness had yawned before him, revealing life as a hollow delusion. He no longer cared.

Immersed in bitter reflection, he climbed the familiar stairway and sent his card to Mr. Keen, and in due time he was ushered into the presence of the Tracer of Lost Persons.

"Mr. Keen," he began, with a headlong desire to get it over and be done with it, "I may as well tell you how impossible it is for you, or anybody, to find that person I described——"

Mr. Keen raised an expostulatory hand, smiling indulgence.

"It is more than possible, Mr. Gatewood, more than probable; it is almost an accomplished fact.

In other words, I think I may venture to congratulate you and say that she *is* found."

"Now, *how* can she be found, when there isn't——"

"Mr. Gatewood, the magician will always wave his magic wand for you and show you his miracles for the price of admission. But for that price he does not show you how he works his miracles," said Keen, laughing.

"But I ought to tell you," persisted Gatewood, "that it is utterly impossible you should find the person I wished to discover, because she——"

"I can only prove that you are wrong," smiled Keen, rising from his easy chair.

"Mr. Keen," said the young man earnestly, "I have been more or less of a chump at times. One of those times was when I came here on this errand. All I desire, now, is to let the matter rest as it is. I am satisfied, and you have lost nothing. Nor have you found anything or anybody. You think you have, but you haven't. I do not wish you to continue the search, or to send me any further reports. I want to forget the whole miserable matter—to be free—to feel myself freed from any obligations to that irritating person I asked you to find."

The Tracer regarded him very gravely.

"Is that your wish, Mr. Gatewood? I can scarcely credit it."

"It is. I've been a fool; I simply want to stop being one if anybody will permit it."

"And you decline to attempt to identify the very beautiful person we have discovered to be the individual for whom you asked us to search?"

"I do. She may be beautiful; but I know well enough she can't compare with—some one."

"I am sorry," said Keen thoughtfully. "We take so much pride in these matters. When one of my agents discovered where this person was, I was rather—happy; for I have taken a peculiar personal interest in your case. However——"

"Mr. Keen," said Gatewood, "if you could understand how ashamed and mortified I am at my own conduct——"

Keen gazed pensively out of the window. "I also am sorry; Miss Southerland was to have received a handsome bonus for her discovery——"

"Miss S-S-S-S-outherland!"

"*Ex*actly; without quite so many *S's*," said Keen, smiling.

"Did *she* discover that—that person?" exclaimed the young man, startled.

"She thinks she has. I am not sure she is correct; but I am absolutely certain that Miss South-

erland could eventually discover the person you were in search of. It seems a little hard on her—just on the eve of success—to lose. But that can't be helped now."

Gatewood, more excited and uncomfortable than he had ever been in all his life, watched Keen intently.

"Too bad, too bad," muttered the Tracer to himself. "The child needs the encouragement. It meant a thousand dollars to her——" He shrugged his shoulders, looked up, and, as though rather surprised to see Gatewood still there, smiled an impersonal smile and offered his hand in adieu. Gatewood winced.

"Could I—I see Miss Southerland?" he asked.

"I am afraid not. She is at this moment following my instructions to—but that cannot interest you now——"

"Yes, it does!—if you don't mind. Where is she? I—I'll take a look at the person she discovered; I will, really."

"Why, it's only this: I suspected that you might identify a person whom I had reason to believe was to be found every morning riding in the Park. So Miss Southerland has been riding there every day. Yesterday she came here, greatly excited——"

"Yes—yes—go on!"

Keen gazed dreamily at the sunny window. "She thought she had found your—er—the person. So I said you would meet her on the bridle path, near—but that's of no interest now——"

"Near where?" demanded Gatewood, suppressing inexplicable excitement. And as Keen said nothing: "I'll go; I want to go, I really do! Can't—can't a fellow change his mind? Oh, I know you think I'm a lunatic, and there's plenty of reason, too!"

Keen studied him calmly. "Yes, plenty of reason, plenty of reason, Mr. Gatewood. But do you suppose you are the only one? I know another who was perfectly sane two weeks ago."

The young man waited impatiently; the Tracer paced the room, gray head bent, delicate, wrinkled hands clasped loosely behind his bent back.

"You have horses at the Whip and Spur Club," he said abruptly. "Suppose you ride out and see how close Miss Southerland has come to solving our problem."

Gatewood seized the offered hand and wrung it with a fervor out of all reason; and it is curious that the Tracer of Lost Persons did not appear to be astonished.

"You're rather impetuous—like your father,"

he said slowly. "I knew him; so I've ventured to trust his son—even when I heard how aimlessly he was living his life. Mr. Gatewood! May I ask you something—as an old friend of your father?"

The young man nodded, subdued, perplexed, scarcely understanding.

"It's only this: If you *do* find the woman you could love—in the Park—to-day—come back to me some day and let me tell you all those foolish, trite, tiresome things that I should have told a son of mine. I am so old that you will not take offense—you will not mind listening to me, or forgetting the dull, prosy things I say about the curse of idleness, and the habits of cynical thinking, and the perils of vacant-minded indulgence. You will forgive me—and you will forget me. That will be as it should be. Good-by."

Gatewood, sobered, surprised, descended the stairs and hailed a hansom.

CHAPTER VI

All the way to the Whip and Spur Club he sat buried in a reverie from which, at intervals, he started, aroused by the heavy, expectant beating of his own pulses. But what did he expect, in Heaven's name? Not the discovery of a woman who had never existed. Yet his excitement and impatience grew as he watched the saddling of his horse; and when at length he rode out into the sunshine and cantered through the Park entrance, his sense of impending events and his expectancy amounted to a fever which colored his face attractively.

He saw her almost immediately. Her horse was walking slowly in the dappled shadows of the new foliage; she, listless in her saddle, sometimes watching the throngs of riders passing, at moments turning to gaze into the woodland vistas where, over the thickets of flowering shrubbery, orioles and robins sped flashing on tinted wings from shadow to sun, from sun to shadow. But she looked up as he drew bridle and wheeled his mount

beside her; and, "Oh!" she said, flushing in recognition.

"I have missed you terribly," he said quietly.

It was dreamy weather, even for late spring: the scent of lilacs and mock-orange hung heavy as incense along the woods. Their voices unconsciously found the key to harmonize with it all.

She said: "Well, I think I have succeeded. In a few moments she will be passing. I do not know her name; she rides a big roan. She is very beautiful, Mr. Gatewood."

He said: "I am perfectly certain we shall find her. I doubted it until now. But now I know."

"Oh-h, but I *may* be wrong," she protested.

"No; you cannot be."

She looked up at him.

"You can have no idea how happy you make me," he said unsteadily.

"But—I—but I may be all wrong—dreadfully wrong!"

"Y-es; you may be, but I shall not be. For do you know that I have already seen her in the Park?"

"When?" she demanded incredulously, then turned in the saddle, repeating: "Where? Did she pass? How perfectly stupid of me! And *was* she the—the right one?"

"She *is* the right one. . . . Don't turn: I have seen her. Ride on: I want to say something—if I can."

"No, no," she insisted. "I must know whether I was right——"

"You *are* right—but you don't know it yet. . . . Oh, very well, then; we'll turn if you insist." And he wheeled his mount as she did, riding at her bridle again.

"How can you take it so coolly—so indifferently?" she said. "Where has that woman—where has she gone? . . . Never mind; she must turn and pass us sooner or later, for she lives uptown. *What* are you laughing at, Mr. Gatewood?"—in annoyed surprise.

"I am laughing at myself. Oh, I'm so many kinds of a fool—you can't think how many, and it's no use!"

She stared, astonished; he shook his head.

"No, you don't understand yet. But you will. Listen to me: this very beautiful lady you have discovered is nothing to me!"

"Nothing—to you!" she faltered. Two pink spots of indignation burned in her cheeks. "How—how dare you say that!—after all that has been done—all that you have said. You said you loved her; you *did* say so—to *me!*"

"I don't love her now."

"But you did!" Tears of pure vexation started; she faced him, eye to eye, thoroughly incensed.

"What sort of man are you?" she said under her breath. "Your friend Mr. Kerns is wrong. You are not worth saving from yourself."

"Kerns!" he repeated, angry and amazed. "What the deuce has Kerns to do with this affair?"

She stared, then, realizing her indiscretion, bit her lip, and spurred forward. But he put his horse to a gallop, and they pounded along in silence. In a little while she drew bridle and looked around coldly, grave with displeasure.

"Mr. Kerns came to us before you did. He said you would probably come, and he begged us to strain every effort in your behalf, because, he said, your happiness absolutely depended upon our finding for you the woman you were seeking. . . . And I tried—very hard—and now she's found. You admit that—and *now* you say——"

"I say that one of these balmy summer days I'll assassinate Tommy Kerns!" broke in Gatewood. "What on earth possessed that prince of butters-in to go to Mr. Keen?"

"To save you from yourself!" retorted the

girl in a low, exasperated voice. "He did not say what threatened you; he is a good friend for a man to have. But we soon found out what you were—a man well born, well bred, full of brilliant possibility, who was slowly becoming an idle, cynical, self-centered egoist—a man who, lacking the lash of need or the spur of ambition, was degenerating through the sheer uselessness and inanity of his life. And, oh, the pity of it! For Mr. Keen and I have taken a—a curiously personal interest in you—in your case. I say, the pity of it!"

Astounded, dumb under her stinging words, he rode beside her through the brilliant sunshine, wheeled mechanically as she turned her horse, and rode north again.

"And now — *now!*" she said passionately, "you turn on the woman you loved! Oh, you are not worth it!"

"You are quite right," he said, turning very white under her scorn. "Almost all you have said is true enough, I fancy. I amount to nothing; I am idle, cynical, selfish. The emptiness of such a life requires a stimulant; even a fool abhors a vacuum. So I drink—not so very much yet—but more than I realize. And it is close enough to a habit to worry me. . . . Yes, almost all you say is true; Kerns knows it; I know it—now that you

have told me. You see, he couldn't tell me, because I should not have believed him. But I believe you —all you say, except one thing. And that is only a glimmer of decency left in me—not that I make any merit of it. No, it is merely instinctive. For I have *not* turned on the woman I loved."

Her face was pale as her level eyes met him:

"You said she was nothing to you. . . . Look there! Do you see her? Do you see?"

Her voice broke nervously as he swung around to stare at a rider bearing down at a gallop—a woman on a big roan, tearing along through the spring sunshine, passing them with wind-flushed cheeks and dark, incurious eyes, while her powerful horse carried her on, away through the quivering light and shadow of the woodland vista.

"Is *that* the person?"

"Y-es," she faltered. "Was I wrong?"

"Quite wrong, Miss Southerland."

"But—but you said you had seen her here this morning!"

"Yes, I have."

"Did you speak to her before you met me?"

"No—not before I met you."

"Then you have not spoken to her. Is she still here in the Park?"

"Yes, she is still here."

The girl turned on him excitedly: "Do you mean to say that you will not speak to her?"

"I had rather not——"

"And your happiness depends on your speaking?"

"Yes."

"Then it is cowardly not to speak."

"Oh, yes, it is cowardly. . . . If you wish me to speak to her I will. Shall I?"

"Yes. . . . Show her to me."

"And you think that such a man as I am has a right to speak of love to her?"

"I—we believe it will be your salvation. Mr. Kerns says you must marry her to be happy. Mr. Keen told me yesterday that it only needed a word from the right woman to put you on your mettle. . . . And—and that is my opinion."

"Then in charity say that word!" he breathed, bending toward her. "Can't you see? Can't you understand? Don't you know that from the moment I looked into your eyes I loved you?"

"How—how dare you!" she stammered, crimsoning.

"God knows," he said wistfully. "I am a coward. I don't know how I dared. Good-by. . . ."

He walked his horse a little way, then launched

him into a gallop, tearing on and on, sun, wind, trees swimming, whirling like a vision, hearing nothing, feeling nothing, save the leaden pounding of his pulse and the breathless, terrible tightening in his throat.

When he cleared his eyes and looked around he was quite alone, his horse walking under the trees and breathing heavily.

At first he laughed, and the laugh was not pleasant. Then he said aloud: "It is worth having lived for, after all!"—and was silent. And again: "I could expect nothing; she was perfectly right to side-step a fool. . . . And *such* a fool!"

The distant gallop of a horse, dulled on the soft soil, but coming nearer, could not arouse him from the bitter depths he had sunk in; not even when the sound ceased beside him, and horse snorted recognition to horse. It was only when a light touch rested on his arm that he looked up heavily, caught his breath.

"Where is the other—woman?" she gasped.

"There never was any other."

"You said——"

"I said I loved my ideal. I did not know she existed—until I saw you."

"Then—then we were searching for——"

"A vision. But it was your face that haunted

me. . . . And I am not worth it, as you say. And I know it, . . . for you have opened my eyes."

He drew bridle, forcing a laugh. "I cut a sorry figure in your life; be patient; I am going out of it now." And he swung his horse. At the same moment she did the same, making a demi-tour and meeting him halfway, confronting him.

"Do you—you mean to ride out of my life without a word?" she asked unsteadily.

"Good-by." He offered his hand, stirring his horse forward; she leaned lightly over and laid both hands in his. Then, her face surging in color, she lifted her beautiful dark eyes to his as the horses approached, nearer, nearer, until, as they passed, flank brushing flank, her eyes fell, then closed as she swayed toward him, and clung, her young lips crushed to his.

There was nobody to witness it except the birds and squirrels—nobody but a distant mounted policeman, who almost fainted away in his saddle.

Oh, it was awful, awful! Apparently she had been kissed speechless, for she said nothing. The man fool did all the talking, incoherently enough, but evidently satisfactory to her, judging from the way she looked at him, and blushed and blushed, and touched her eyes with a bit of cambric at intervals.

All the policeman heard as they passed him was: "I'm going to give you this horse, and Kerns is to give us our silver; and what do you think, my darling?"

"W-what?"

But they had already passed out of earshot; and in a few moments the shady, sun-flecked bridle path was deserted again save for the birds and squirrels, and a single mounted policeman, rigid, wild eyed, twisting his mustache and breathing hard.

CHAPTER VII

The news of Gatewood's fate filled Kerns with a pleasure bordering upon melancholy. It was his work; he had done it; it was good for Gatewood too—time for him to stop his irresponsible cruise through life, lower sail, heave to, set his signals, and turn over matters to this charming pilot.

And now they would come into port together and anchor somewhere east of Fifth Avenue—which, Kerns reflected, was far more proper a place for Gatewood than somewhere east of Suez, where young men so often sail.

And yet, and yet there was something melancholy in the pleasure he experienced. Gatewood was practically lost to him. He knew what might be expected from engaged men and newly married men. Gatewood's club life was ended—for a while; and there was no other man with whom he cared to embark for those brightly lighted harbors twinkling east of Suez across the metropolitan wastes.

"It's very generous of me to get him married," he said frequently to himself, rather sadly. "I did it pretty well, too. It only shows that women have no particular monopoly in the realms of

diplomacy and finesse; in fact, if a man really chooses to put his mind to such matters, he can make it no trumps and win out behind a bum ace and a guarded knave."

He was pleased with himself. He followed Gatewood about explaining how good he had been to him. An enthusiasm for marrying off his friends began to germinate within him; he tried it on Darrell, on Barnes, on Yates, but was turned down and severely stung.

Then one day Harren of the Philippine Scouts turned up at the club, and they held a determined reunion until daylight, and they told each other all about it all and what upper-cuts life had handed out to them since the troopship sailed.

And after the rosy glow had deepened to a more gorgeous hue in the room, and the electric lights had turned into silver pinwheels; and after they had told each other the story of their lives, and the last siphon fizzed impotently when urged beyond its capacity, Kerns arose and extended his hand, and Harren took it. And they executed a song resembling "Auld Lang Syne."

"Ole man," said Kerns reproachfully, "there's one thing you have been deuced careful *not* to mention, and that is about what happened to you three years ago——"

"Steady!" said Harren; "there is nothing to tell, Tommy."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing. I never saw her again. I never shall."

Kerns looked long and unsteadily upon his friend; then very gravely fumbled in his pocket and drew forth the business card of Westrel Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons.

"That," he said, "will be about all." And he bestowed the card upon Harren with magnificent condescension.

And about five o'clock the following afternoon Harren found the card among various effects of his, scattered over his dresser.

It took him several days to make up his mind to pay any attention to the card or the suggestion it contained. He scarcely considered it seriously even when, passing along Fifth Avenue one sunny afternoon, he chanced to glance up and see the sign

KEEN & CO.
TRACERS OF LOST PERSONS

staring him in the face.

He continued his stroll, but that evening, upon mere impulse, he sat down and wrote a letter to Mr. Keen.

The next morning's mail brought a reply and an appointment for an interview on Wednesday week. Harren tossed the letter aside, satisfied to let the matter go, because his leave expired on Tuesday, and the appointment was impossible.

On Sunday, however, the melancholy of the deserted club affected his spirits. A curious desire to see this Tracer of Lost Persons seized him with a persistence unaccountable. He slept poorly, haunted with visions.

On Monday he went to see Mr. Keen. It could do no harm; it was too late to do either harm or good, for his leave expired the next day at noon.

The business of Keen & Co., Tracers of Lost Persons, had grown to enormous proportions; appointments for a personal interview with Mr. Keen were now made a week in advance, so when young Harren sent in his card, the gayly liveried negro servant came back presently, threading his way through the waiting throng with pomp and circumstance, and returned the card to Harren with the date of appointment rewritten in ink across the top. The day named was Wednesday. On Tuesday Harren's leave expired.

"That won't do," said the young man brusquely; "I must see Mr. Keen to-day. I wrote last week for an appointment."

The liveried darky was polite but obdurate.

"Dis here am de 'pintment, suh," he explained persuasively.

"But I want to see Mr. Keen at once," insisted Harren.

"Hit ain't no use, suh," said the darky respectfully; "dey's mi'ions an' mi'ions ob gemmen jess a-settin' roun' an' waitin' foh Mistuh Keen. In dis here perfeshion, suh, de fustest gemman dat has a 'pintment is de fustest gemman dat kin see Mistuh Keen. You is a military gemman yohse'f, Cap'm Harren, an' you is aware dat precedence am de rigger."

The bronzed young man smiled, glanced at the date of appointment written on his card, which also bore his own name followed by the letters U. S. A., then his amused gray eyes darkened and he glanced leisurely around the room, where a dozen or more assorted people sat waiting their turns to interview Mr. Keen: all sorts and conditions of people—smartly gowned women, an anxious-browed business man or two, a fat German truck driver, his greasy cap on his knees, a surly policeman, and an old Irishwoman, wearing a shawl and an ancient straw bonnet. Harren's eyes reverted to the darky.

"You will explain to Mr. Keen," he said, "that

I am an army officer on leave, and that I am obliged to start for Manila to-morrow. This is my excuse for asking an immediate interview; and if it's not a good enough excuse I must cancel this appointment, that is all."

The darky stood, irresolute, inclined to argue, but something in the steel-gray eyes of the man set him in involuntary motion, and he went away once more with the young man's message. Harren turned and walked back to his seat. The old woman with the faded shawl was explaining volubly to a handsomely gowned woman beside her that she was looking for her boy, Danny; that her name was Mrs. Regan, and that she washed for the aristocracy of Hunter's Point at a liberal price per dozen, using no deleterious substances in the suds as Heaven was her witness.

The German truck driver, moved by this confidence, was stirred to begin an endless account of his domestic misfortunes, and old Mrs. Regan, becoming impatient, had already begun to interrupt with an account of Regan's recent hoisting on the wings of a premature petard, when the dark servant reappeared.

"Mistuh Keen will receive you, suh," he whispered, leading the way into a large room where dozens of attractive young girls sat very busily

engaged at typewriting machines. Door after door they passed, all numbered on the ground-glass panes, then swung to the right, where the darky bowed him into a big, handsomely furnished room flooded with the morning sun. A tall, gray man, faultlessly dressed in a gray frock suit and wearing white spats, turned from the breezy, open window to inspect him; the lean, well groomed, rather lank type of gentleman suggesting a retired colonel of cavalry; unmistakably well bred from the ends of his drooping gray mustache to the last button on his immaculate spats.

"Captain Harren?" he said pleasantly.

"Mr. Keen?"

They bowed. Young Harren drew from his pocket a card. It was the business card of Keen & Co., and, glancing up at Mr. Keen, he read it aloud, carefully:

KEEN & CO.

TRACERS OF LOST PERSONS

Keen & Co. are prepared to locate the
whereabouts of anybody on earth.
No charges will be made unless
the person searched for
is found.

Blanks on Application.

WESTREL KEEN, Manager.

Harren raised his clear, gray eyes. "I assume this statement to be correct, Mr. Keen?"

"You may safely assume so," said Mr. Keen, smiling.

"Does this statement include *all* that you are prepared to undertake?"

The Tracer of Lost Persons inspected him coolly. "What more is there, Captain Harren? I undertake to find lost people. I even undertake to find the undiscovered ideals of young people who have failed to meet them. What further field would you suggest?" Harren glanced at the card which he held in his gloved hand; then, very slowly, he re-read, "the whereabouts of anybody *on earth*," accenting the last two words deliberately as he encountered Keen's piercing gaze again.

"Well?" asked Mr. Keen laughingly, "is not that sufficient? Our clients could scarcely expect us to invade heaven in our search for the vanished."

"There are other regions," said Harren.

"*Ex*actly. Sit down, sir. There is a row of bookcases for your amusement. Please help yourself while I clear decks for action."

Harren stood fingering the card, his gray eyes lost in retrospection; then he sauntered over to

the bookcases, scanning the titles. The Searcher for Lost Persons studied him for a moment or two, turned, and began to pace the room. After a moment or two he touched a bell. A sweet-faced young girl entered; she was gowned in black and wore a white collar, and cuffs turned back over her hands.

"Take this memorandum," he said. The girl picked up a pencil and pad, and Mr. Keen, still pacing the room, dictated in a quiet voice as he walked to and fro:

"Mrs. Regan's Danny is doing six months in Butte, Montana. Break it to her as mercifully as possible. He is a bad one. We make no charge. The truck driver, Becker, can find his wife at her mother's house, Leonia, New Jersey. Tell him to be less pig-headed or she'll go for good some day. Ten dollars. Mrs. M., No. 36001, can find her missing butler in service at 79 Vine Street, Hartford, Connecticut. She may notify the police whenever she wishes. His portrait is No. 170529, Rogues' Gallery. Five hundred dollars. Miss K. (No. 3679) may send her letter, care of Cisneros & Co., Rio, where the person she is seeking has gone into the coffee business. If she decides that she really does love him, he'll come back fast enough. Two hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. W.

(No. 3620) must go to the morgue for further information. His repentance is too late; but he can see that there is a decent burial. The charge: one thousand dollars to the Florence Mission. You may add that we possess his full record."

The Tracer paused and waited for the stenographer to finish. When she looked up: "Who else is waiting?" he asked.

The girl read over the initials and numbers.

"Tell that policeman that Kid Conroy sails on the *Carania* to-morrow. Fifty dollars. There is nothing definite in the other cases. Report progress and send out a general alarm for the cashier inquired for by No. 3608. You will find details in vol. xxxix under B."

"Is that all, Mr. Keen?"

"Yes. I'm going to be very busy with"—turning slowly toward Harren—"with Captain Harren, of the Philippine Scouts, until to-morrow—a very complicated case, Miss Borrow, involving cipher codes and photography——"

CHAPTER VIII

Harren started, then walked slowly to the center of the room as the pretty stenographer passed out with a curious level glance at him.

"Why do you say that photography plays a part in my case?" he asked.

"Doesn't it?"

"Yes. But how——"

"Oh, I only guessed it," said Keen with a smile. "I made another guess that your case involved a cipher code. Does it?"

"Y-es," said the young man, astonished, "but I don't see——"

"It also involves the occult," observed Keen calmly. "We may need Miss Borrow to help us."

Almost staggered, Harren stared at the Tracer out of his astonished gray eyes until that gentleman laughed outright and seated himself, motioning Harren to do likewise.

"Don't be surprised, Captain Harren," he said. "I suppose you have no conception of our business, no realization of its scope—its network of information bureaus all over the civilized world, its

myriad sources of information, the immensity of its delicate machinery, the endless data and the infinitesimal details we have at our command. You, of course, have no idea of the number of people of every sort and condition who are in our employ, of the ceaseless yet inoffensive surveillance we maintain. For example, when your letter came last week I called up the person who has charge of the army list. There you were, Kenneth Harren, Captain Philippine Scouts, with the date of your graduation from West Point. Then I called up a certain department devoted to personal detail, and in five minutes I knew your entire history. I then touched another electric button, and in a minute I had before me the date of your arrival in New York, your present address, and"—he looked up quizzically at Harren—"and several items of general information, such as your peculiar use of your camera, and the list of books on Psychical Phenomena and Cryptograms which you have been buying——"

Harren flushed up. "Do you mean to say that I have been spied upon, Mr. Keen?"

"No more than anybody else who comes to us as a client. There was nothing offensive in the surveillance." He shrugged his shoulders and made a deprecating gesture. "Ours is a business, my

dear sir, like any other. We, of course, are obliged to know about people who call on us. Last week you wrote me, and I immediately set every wheel in motion; in other words, I had you under observation from the day I received your letter to this very moment."

"You learned much concerning me?" asked Harren quietly.

"*Ex*actly, my dear sir."

"But," continued Harren with a touch of malice, "you didn't learn that my leave is up to-morrow, did you?"

"Yes, I learned that, too."

"Then why did you give me an appointment for the day after to-morrow?" demanded the young man bluntly.

The Tracer looked him squarely in the eye. "Your leave is to be extended," he said.

"What?"

"*Ex*actly. It has been extended one week."

"How do you know that?"

"You applied for extension, did you not?"

"Yes," said Harren, turning red, "but I don't see how you knew that I——"

"By cable?"

"Y-yes."

"There's a cablegram in your rooms at this

very moment," said the Tracer carelessly. "You have the extension you desired. And now, Captain Harren," with a singularly pleasant smile, "what can I do to help you to a pursuit of that true happiness which is guaranteed for all good citizens under our Constitution?"

Captain Harren crossed his long legs, dropping one knee over the other, and deliberately surveyed his interrogator.

"I really have no right to come to you," he said slowly. "Your prospectus distinctly states that Keen & Co. undertake to find *live* people, and I don't know whether the person I am seeking is alive or—or——"

His steady voice faltered; the Tracer watched him curiously.

"Of course, that is important," he said. "If she *is* dead——"

"*She!*"

"Didn't you say 'she,' Captain?"

"No, I did not."

"I beg your pardon, then, for anticipating you," said the Tracer carelessly.

"Anticipating? *How* do you know it is not a man I am in search of?" demanded Harren.

"Captain Harren, you are unmarried and have no son; you have no father, no brother, no sister.

Therefore I infer—several things—for example, that you are in love."

"I? In love?"

"Desperately, Captain."

"Your inferences seem to satisfy you, at least," said Harren almost sullenly, "but they don't satisfy me—clever as they appear to be."

"*Ex*actly. Then you are *not* in love?"

"I don't know whether I am or not."

"I do," said the Tracer of Lost Persons.

"Then you know more than I," retorted Harren sharply.

"But that is my business—to know more than you do," returned Mr. Keen patiently. "Else why are you here to consult me?" And as Harren made no reply: "I have seen thousands and thousands of people in love. I have reduced the superficial muscular phenomena and facial symptomatic aspect of such people to an exact science founded upon a schedule approximating the Bertillon system of records. And," he added, smiling, "out of the twenty-seven known vocal variations your voice betrays twenty-five unmistakable symptoms; and out of the sixteen reflex muscular symptoms your face has furnished six, your hands three, your limbs and feet six. Then there are other superficial symptoms——"

"Good heavens!" broke in Harren; "how can you prove a man to be in love when he himself doesn't know whether he is or not? If a man isn't in love no Bertillon system can make him so; and if a man doesn't know whether or not he is in love, who can tell him the truth?"

"I can," said the Tracer calmly.

"What! When I tell you I myself don't know?"

"*That*," said the Tracer, smiling, "is the final and convincing symptom. *You* don't know. *I* know because you *don't* know. That is the easiest way to be sure that you are in love, Captain Harren, because you always are when you are not sure. You'd know if you were *not* in love. Now, my dear sir, you may lay your case confidently before me."

Harren, unconvinced, sat frowning and biting his lip and twisting his short, crisp mustache which the tropical sun had turned straw color and curly.

"I feel like a fool to tell you," he said. "I'm not an imaginative man, Mr. Keen; I'm not fanciful, not sentimental. I'm perfectly healthy, perfectly normal—a very busy man in my profession, with no time and no inclination to fall in love."

"Just the sort of man who does it," commented Keen. "Continue."

Harren fidgeted about in his chair, looked out of the window, squinted at the ceiling, then straightened up, folding his arms with sudden determination.

"I'd rather be boloed than tell you," he said. "Perhaps, after all, I *am* a lunatic; perhaps I've had a touch of the Luzon sun and don't know it."

"I'll be the judge," said the Tracer, smiling.

"Very well, sir. Then I'll begin by telling you that I've seen a ghost."

"There are such things," observed Keen quietly.

"Oh, I don't mean one of those fabled sheeted creatures that float about at night; I mean a phantom—a real phantom — in the sunlight — standing before my very eyes in broad day! . . . Now do you feel inclined to go on with my case, Mr. Keen?"

"Certainly," replied the Tracer gravely. "Please continue, Captain Harren."

"All right, then. Here's the beginning of it: Three years ago, here in New York, drifting along Fifth Avenue with the crowd, I looked up to encounter the most wonderful pair of eyes that

I ever beheld—that any living man ever beheld! The most—wonderfully—beautiful——"

He sat so long immersed in retrospection that the Tracer said: "I am listening, Captain," and the Captain woke up with a start.

"What was I saying? How far had I proceeded?"

"Only to the eyes."

"Oh, I see! The eyes were dark, sir, dark and lovely beyond any power of description. The hair was also dark—very soft and thick and—er—wavy and dark. The face was extremely youthful, and ornamental to the uttermost verges of a beauty so exquisite that, were I to attempt to formulate for you its individual attractions, I should, I fear, transgress the strictly rigid bounds of that reticence which becomes a gentleman in complete possession of his senses."

"*Ex*actly," mused the Tracer.

"Also," continued Captain Harren, with growing animation, "to attempt to describe her figure would be utterly useless, because I am a practical man and not a poet, nor do I read poetry or indulge in futile novels or romances of any description. Therefore I can only add that it was a figure, a poise, absolutely faultless, youthful, beautiful, erect, wholesome, gracious, graceful,

charmingly buoyant and—well, I cannot describe her figure, and I shall not try."

"*Ex*actly; don't try."

"No," said Harren mournfully, "it is useless"; and he relapsed into enchanted retrospection.

"Who was she?" asked Mr. Keen softly.

"I don't know."

"You never again saw her?"

"Mr. Keen, I—I am not ill-bred, but I simply could not help following her. She was so b-b-beautiful that it hurt; and I only wanted to look at her; I didn't mind being hurt. So I walked on and on, and sometimes I'd pass her and sometimes I'd let her pass me, and when she wasn't looking I'd look—not offensively, but just because I *couldn't* help it. And all the time my senses were humming like a top and my heart kept jumping to get into my throat, and I hadn't a notion where I was going or what time it was or what day of the week. She didn't see me; she didn't dream that I was looking at her; she didn't know me from any of the thousand silk-hatted, frock-coated men who passed and repassed her on Fifth Avenue. And when she went into St. Berold's Church, I went, too, and I stood where I could see her and where she couldn't see me. It was like a touch of the

Luzon sun, Mr. Keen. And then she came out and got into a Fifth Avenue stage, and I got in, too. And whenever she looked away I looked at her—without the slightest offense, Mr. Keen, until, once, she caught my eye——"

He passed an unsteady hand over his forehead.

"For a moment we looked full at one another," he continued. "I got red, sir; I felt it, and I couldn't look away. And when I turned color like a blooming beet, she began to turn pink like a rosebud, and she looked full into my eyes with such a wonderful purity, such exquisite innocence, that I—I never felt so near—er—heaven in my life! No, sir, not even when they ambushed us at Manoa Wells—but that's another thing—only it is part of this business."

He tightened his clasped hands over his knee until the knuckles whitened.

"*That's* my story, Mr. Keen," he said crisply.

"All of it?"

Harren looked at the floor, then at Keen: "No, not all. You'll think me a lunatic if I tell you all."

"Oh, you saw her again?"

"N-never! That is——"

"Never?"

"Not in—in the flesh."

"Oh, in dreams?"

Harren stirred uneasily. "I don't know what you call them. I have seen her since—in the sunlight, in the open, in my quarters in Manila, standing there perfectly distinct, looking at me with such strange, beautiful eyes——"

"Go on," said the Tracer, nodding.

"What else is there to say?" muttered Harren.

"You saw her—or a phantom which resembled her. Did she speak?"

"No."

"Did you speak to her?"

"N-no. Once I held out my—my arms."

"What happened?"

"She wasn't there," said Harren simply.

"She vanished?"

"No—I don't know. I—I didn't see her any more."

"Didn't she fade?"

"No. I can't explain. She—there was only myself in the room."

"How many times has she appeared to you?"

"A great many times."

"In your room?"

"Yes. And in the road under a vertical sun; in the forest, in the paddy fields. I have seen her passing through the hallway of a friend's house—

"'Standing there . . . looking at me with such strange beautiful eyes——'"

turning on the stair to look back at me! I saw her standing just back of the firing-line at Manoa Wells when we were preparing to rush the forts, and it scared me so that I jumped forward to draw her back. But—she wasn't there, Mr. Keen. . . .

"On the transport she stood facing me on deck one moonlit evening for five minutes. I saw her in 'Frisco; she sat in the Pullman twice between Denver and this city. Twice in my room at the Vice-Regent she has sat opposite me at midday, so clear, so beautiful, so real that—that I could scarcely believe she was only a—a——" He hesitated.

"The apparition of her own subconscious self," said the Tracer quietly. "Science has been forced to admit such things, and, as you know, we are on the verge of understanding the alphabet of some of the unknown forces which we must some day reckon with."

Harren, tense, a trifle pale, gazed at him earnestly.

"Do *you* believe in such things?"

"How can I avoid believing?" said the Tracer. "Every day, in my profession, we have proof of the existence of forces for which we have as yet no explanation—or, at best, a very crude one. I have had case after case of premonition; case after case

of dual and even multiple personality; case after case where apparitions played a vital part in the plot which was brought to me to investigate. I'll tell you this, Captain: I, personally, never saw an apparition, never was obsessed by premonitions, never received any communications from the outer void. But I have had to do with those who undoubtedly did. Therefore I listen with all seriousness and respect to what you tell me."

"Suppose," said Harren, growing suddenly red, "that I should tell you I have succeeded in photographing this phantom."

The Tracer sat silent. He was astounded, but he did not betray it.

"You have that photograph, Captain Harren?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"In my rooms."

"You wish me to see it?"

Harren hesitated. "I—there is—seems to be—something almost sacred to me in that photograph. . . . You understand me, do you not? Yet, if it will help you in finding her——"

"Oh," said the Tracer in guileless astonishment, "you desire to find this young lady. Why?"

Harren stared. "Why? Why do I want to find her? Man, I—I can't live without her!"

"I thought you were not certain whether you really could be in love."

The hot color in the Captain's bronzed cheeks mounted to his hair.

"*Ex*actly," purred the Tracer, looking out of the window. "Suppose we walk around to your rooms after luncheon. Shall we?"

Harren picked up his hat and gloves, hesitating, lingering on the threshold. "You *don't* think she is—a—dead?" he asked unsteadily.

"No," said Mr. Keen, "I don't."

"Because," said Harren wistfully, "her apparition is so superbly healthy and—and glowing with youth and life——"

"That is probably what sent it half the world over to confront you," said the Tracer gravely; "youth and life aglow with spiritual health. I think, Captain, that she has been seeing you, too, during these three years, but probably only in her dreams—memories of your encounters with her subconscious self floating over continents and oceans in a quest of which her waking intelligence is innocently unaware."

The Captain colored like a schoolboy, lingering at the door, hat in hand. Then he straightened up

to the full height of his slim but powerful figure.

"At three?" he inquired bluntly.

"At three o'clock in your room, Hotel Vice-Regent. Good morning, Captain."

"Good morning," said Harren dreamily, and walked away, head bent, gray eyes lost in retrospection, and on his lean, bronzed, attractive face an afterglow of color wholly becoming.

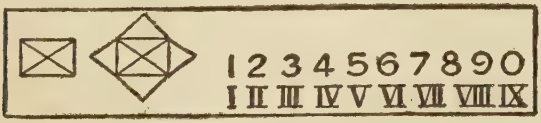
CHAPTER IX

When the Tracer of Lost Persons entered Captain Harren's room at the Hotel Vice-Regent that afternoon he found the young man standing at a center table, pencil in hand, studying a sheet of paper which was covered with letters and figures.

The two men eyed one another in silence for a moment, then Harren pointed grimly to the confusion of letters and figures covering dozens of scattered sheets lying on the table.

"That's part of my madness," he said with a short laugh. "Can you make anything of such lunatic work?"

The Tracer picked up a sheet of paper covered with letters of the alphabet and Roman and Arabic numerals. He dropped it presently and picked up another comparatively blank sheet, on which were the following figures:



He studied it for a while, then glanced interrogatively at Harren.

"It's nothing," said Harren. "I've been groping for three years—but it's no use. That's lunatics' work." He wheeled squarely on his heels, looking straight at the Tracer. "*Do* you think I've had a touch of the sun?"

"No," said Mr. Keen, drawing a chair to the table. "Saner men than you or I have spent a lifetime over this so-called Seal of Solomon." He laid his finger on the two symbols—

Then, looking across the table at Harren: "What," he asked, "has the Seal of Solomon to do with your case?"

"*She*——" muttered Harren, and fell silent.

The Tracer waited; Harren said nothing.

"Where is the photograph?"

Harren unlocked a drawer in the table, hesitated, looked strangely at the Tracer.

"Mr. Keen," he said, "there is nothing on earth I hold more sacred than this. There is only one thing in the world that could justify me in showing it to a living soul—my—my desire to find—her——"

"No," said Keen coolly, "that is not enough to justify you—the mere desire to find the living

original of this apparition. Nothing could justify your showing it unless you love her."

Harren held the picture tightly, staring full at the Tracer. A dull flush mounted to his forehead, and very slowly he laid the picture before the Tracer of Lost Persons.

Minute after minute sped while the Tracer bent above the photograph, his finely modeled features absolutely devoid of expression. Harren had drawn his chair beside him, and now sat leaning forward, bronzed cheek resting in his hand, staring fixedly at the picture.

"When was this—this photograph taken?" asked the Tracer quietly.

"The day after I arrived in New York. I was here, alone, smoking my pipe and glancing over the evening paper just before dressing for dinner. It was growing rather dark in the room; I had not turned on the electric light. My camera lay on the table—there it is!—that kodak. I had taken a few snapshots on shipboard; there was one film left."

He leaned more heavily on his elbow, eyes fixed upon the picture.

"It was almost dark," he repeated. "I laid aside the evening paper and stood up, thinking about dressing for dinner, when my eyes happened

to fall on the camera. It occurred to me that I might as well unload it, let the unused film go, and send the roll to be developed and printed; and I picked up the camera——"

"Yes," said the Tracer softly.

"I picked it up and was starting toward the window where there remained enough daylight to see by——"

The Tracer nodded gently.

"Then I saw *her!*" said Harren under his breath.

"Where?"

"There—standing by that window. You can see the window and curtain in the photograph."

The Tracer gazed intently at the picture.

"She looked at me," said Harren, steadying his voice. "She was as real as you are, and she stood there, smiling faintly, her dark, lovely eyes meeting mine."

"Did you speak?"

"No."

"How long did she remain there?"

"I don't know — time seemed to stop — the world—everything grew still. . . . Then, little by little, something began to stir under my stunned senses—that germ of misgiving, that dreadful doubt of my own sanity. . . . I scarcely

knew what I was doing when I took the photograph; besides, it had grown quite dark, and I could scarcely see her." He drew himself erect with a nervous movement. "How on earth could I have obtained that photograph of her in the darkness?" he demanded.

"N-rays," said the Tracer coolly. "It has been done in France."

"Yes, from living people, but——"

"What the N-ray is in living organisms, we must call, for lack of a better term, the subaura in the phantom."

They bent over the photograph together. Presently the Tracer said: "She is very, very beautiful?"

Harren's dry lips unclosed, but he uttered no sound.

"She is beautiful, is she not?" repeated the Tracer, turning to look at the young man.

"Can you not see she is?" he asked impatiently.

"No," said the Tracer.

Harren stared at him.

"Captain Harren," continued the Tracer, "I can see nothing upon this bit of paper that resembles in the remotest degree a human face or figure."

Harren turned white.

"Not that I doubt that *you* can see it," pursued the Tracer calmly. "I simply repeat that I see absolutely nothing on this paper except a part of a curtain, a window pane, and—and——"

"What! for God's sake!" cried Harren hoarsely.

"I don't know yet. Wait; let me study it."

"Can you not see her face, her eyes? *Don't* you see that exquisite slim figure standing there by the curtain?" demanded Harren, laying his shaking finger on the photograph. "Why, man, it is as clear, as clean cut, as distinct as though the picture had been taken in sunlight! Do you mean to say that there is nothing there—that I am crazy?"

"No. Wait."

"Wait! How can I wait when you sit staring at her picture and telling me that you can't see it, but that it is doubtless there? Are you deceiving me, Mr. Keen? Are you trying to humor me, trying to be kind to me, knowing all the while that I'm crazy——"

"Wait, man! You are no more crazy than I am. I tell you that I can see something on the window pane——"

He suddenly sprang up and walked to the win-

dow, leaning close and examining the glass. Harren followed and laid his hand lightly over the pane.

"Do you see any marks on the glass?" demanded Keen.

Harren shook his head.

"Have you a magnifying glass?" asked the Tracer.

Harren pointed back to the table, and they returned to the photograph, the Tracer bending over it and examining it through the glass.

"All I see," he said, still studying the photograph, "is a corner of a curtain and a window on which certain figures seem to have been cut. . . . Look, Captain Harren, can you see them?"

"I see some marks—some squares."

"You can't see anything written on that pane—as though cut by a diamond?"

"Nothing distinct."

"But you see *her?*"

"Perfectly."

"In minute detail?"

"Yes."

The Tracer thought a moment: "Does she wear a ring?"

"Yes; can't you see?"

"Draw it for me."

They seated themselves side by side, and Harren drew a rough sketch of the ring which he insisted was so plainly visible on her hand:

"Oh," observed the Tracer, "she wears the Seal of Solomon on her ring."

Harren looked up at him. "That symbol has haunted me persistently for three years," he said. "I have found it everywhere—on articles that I buy, on house furniture, on the belts of dead ladrones, on the hilts of creeses, on the funnels of steamers, on the headstalls of horses. If they put a laundry mark on my linen it's certain to be this!

If I buy a box of matches the sign is on it. Why, I've even seen it on the brilliant wings of tropical insects. It's got on my nerves. I dream about it."

"And you buy books about it and try to work out its mystical meaning?" suggested the Tracer, smiling.

But Harren's gray eyes were serious. He said: "*She* never comes to me without that symbol somewhere about her. . . . I told you she never spoke

to me. That is true; yet once, in a vivid dream of her, she did speak. I—I was almost ashamed to tell you of that."

"Tell me."

"A—a dream? Do you wish to know what I dreamed?"

"Yes—if it was a dream."

"It was. I was asleep on the deck of the *Mindinao*, dead tired after a fruitless hike. I dreamed she came toward me through a young woodland all lighted by the sun, and in her hands she held masses of that wild flower we call Solomon's Seal. And she said—in the voice I know must be like hers: 'If you could only read! If you would only understand the message I send you! It is everywhere on earth for you to read, if you only would!'

"I said: 'Is the message in the seal? Is that the key to it?'

"She nodded, laughing, burying her face in the flowers, and said:

"'Perhaps I can write it more plainly for you some day; I will try very, very hard.'

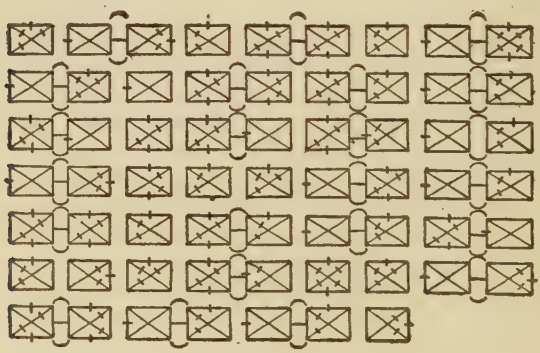
"And after that she went away—not swiftly—for I saw her at moments far away in the woods; but I must have confused her with the glimmering shafts of sunlight, and in a little while the wood-

land grew dark and I woke with the racket of a Colt's automatic in my ears."

He passed his sun-bronzed hand over his face, hesitated, then leaned over the photograph once more, which the Tracer was studying intently through the magnifying glass.

"There is something on that window in the photograph which I'm going to copy," he said. "Please shove a pad and pencil toward me."

Still examining the photograph through the glass which he held in his right hand, Mr. Keen picked up the pencil and, feeling for the pad, began very slowly to form the following series of symbols:



"What on earth are you doing?" muttered Captain Harren, twisting his short mustache in perplexity.

"I am copying what I see through this magnifying glass written on the window pane in the photograph," said the Tracer calmly. "Can't you see those marks?"

"I—I do now; I never noticed them before particularly—only that there were scratches there."

When at length the Tracer had finished his work he sat, chin on hand, examining it in silence. Presently he turned toward Harren, smiling.

"Well?" inquired the younger man impatiently; "do those scratches representing Solomon's Seal mean anything?"

"It's the strangest cipher I ever encountered," said Mr. Keen—"the strangest I ever heard of. I have seen hundreds of ciphers—hundreds—secret codes of the State Department, secret military codes, elaborate Oriental ciphers, symbols used in commercial transactions, symbols used by criminals and every species of malefactor. And every one of them can be solved with time and patience and a little knowledge of the subject. But this"—he sat looking at it with eyes half closed—"this is *too* simple."

"Simple!"

"Very. It's so simple that it's baffling."

"Do you mean to say you are going to be able to find a meaning in squares and crosses?"

"I—I don't believe it is going to be so very difficult to translate them."

"Great guns!" said the Captain. "Do you mean to say that you can ultimately translate that cipher?"

The Tracer smiled. "Let's examine it for repetitions first. Here we have this symbol

repeated five times. It's likely to be the letter E. I think——" His voice ceased; for a quarter of an hour he pored over the symbols, pencil in hand, checking off some, substituting a letter here and there.

"No," he said; "the usual doesn't work in this case. It's an absurdly simple cipher. I have a notion that numbers play a part in it—you see where these crossed squares are bracketed—those must be numbers requiring two figures——"

He fell silent again, and for another quarter of an hour he remained motionless, immersed in the problem before him, Harren frowning at the paper over his shoulder.

CHAPTER X

"Come!" said the Tracer suddenly; "this won't do. There are too few symbols to give us a key; too few repetitions to furnish us with any key basis. Come, Captain, let us use our intellects; let us talk it over with that paper lying there between us. It's a simple cipher—a childishly simple one if we use our wits. Now, sir, what I see repeated before us on this sheet of paper is merely one of the forms of a symbol known as Solomon's Seal. The symbol is, as we see, repeated a great many times. Every seal

has been dotted or crossed on some one of the lines composing it; some seals are coupled with brackets and armatures."

"What of it?" inquired Harren vacantly.

"Well, sir, in the first place, that symbol

is supposed to represent the spiritual and material, as you know. What else do you know about it?"

"Nothing. I bought a book about it, but made nothing of it."

"Isn't it supposed," asked Mr. Keen, "to contain within itself the nine numerals, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and even the zero symbol?"

"I believe so."

"*Ex*actly. Here's the seal

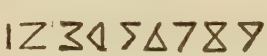
Now I'll mark the one, two, and three by crossing the lines, like this:

one, two, three,

Now, eliminating all lines not crossed there remains

the one, the two, the three,

And here is the entire series:



and the zero— "

A sudden excitement stirred Harren; he leaned over the paper, gazing earnestly at the cipher; the Tracer rose and glanced around the room as though in search of something.

"Is there a telephone here?" he asked.

"For Heaven's sake, don't give this up just

yet," exclaimed Harren. "These things mean numbers; don't you see? Look at that!" pointing to a linked pair of seals,

"That means the number nineteen! You can form it by using only the crossed lines of the seal

Don't you see, Mr. Keen?"

"Yes, Captain Harren, the cipher is, as you say, very plain; quite as easy to read as so much handwriting. That is why I wish to use your telephone—at once, if you please."

"It's in my bedroom; you don't mind if I go on working out this cipher while you're telephoning?"

"Not in the least," said the Tracer blandly. He walked into the Captain's bedroom, closing the door behind him; then he stepped over to the telephone, unhooked the receiver, and called up his own headquarters.

"Hello. This is Mr. Keen. I want to speak to Miss Borrow."

In a few moments Miss Borrow answered: "I am here, Mr. Keen."

"Good. Look up the name Inwood. Try New

York first—Edith Inwood is the name. Look sharp, please; I am holding the wire."

He held it for ten full minutes; then Miss Borrow's low voice called him over the wire.

"Go ahead," said the Tracer quietly.

"There is only one Edith Inwood in New York, Mr. Keen—Miss Edith Inwood, graduate of Barnard, 1902—left an orphan 1903 and obliged to support herself—became an assistant to Professor Boggs of the Museum of Inscriptions. Is considered an authority upon Arabian cryptograms. Has written a monograph on the Herati symbol—a short treatise on the Swastika. She is twenty-four years of age. Do you require further details?"

"No," said the Tracer; "please ring off."

Then he called up General Information. "I want the Museum of Inscriptions. Get me their number, please." After a moment: "Is this the Museum of Inscriptions?"

. . . . .

"Is Professor Boggs there?"

. . . . .

"Is this Professor Boggs?"

. . . . .

"Could you find time to decipher an inscription for me at once?"

. . . . .

"Of course I know you are extremely busy, but have you no assistant who could do it?"

. . . . .

"What did you say her name is? Miss Inwood?"

. . . . .

"Oh! And will the young lady translate the inscription at once if I send a copy of it to her by messenger?"

. . . . .

"Thank you very much, Professor. I will send a messenger to Miss Inwood with a copy of the inscription. Good-by."

He hung up the receiver, turned thoughtfully, opened the door again, and walked into the sunlit living room.

"Look here!" cried the Captain in a high state of excitement. "I've got a lot of numbers out of it already."

"Wonderful!" murmured the Tracer, looking over the young man's broad shoulders at a sheet of paper bearing these numbers:

9—14—5—22—5—18—19—1—23—25—15—21—2—21—20—15—14—3—5—9—12—15—22—5—25—15—21—5—4—9—20—8—9—14—23—15—15—4.

"Marvelous!" repeated the Tracer, smiling.

"Now what *do* you suppose those numbers can stand for?"

"Letters!" announced the Captain triumphantly. "Take the number nine, for example. The ninth letter in the alphabet is I! Mr. Keen, suppose we try writing down the letters according to that system!"

"Suppose we do," agreed the Tracer gravely.

So, counting under his breath, the young man set down the letters in the following order, not attempting to group them into words:

INEVERSAWYOUBUTONCEILOVEYOUEDITHINWOOD.

Then he leaned back, excited, triumphant.

"There you are!" he said; "only, of course, it makes no sense." He examined it in silence, and gradually a hopeless expression effaced the animation. "How the deuce am I going to separate that mass of letters into words?" he muttered.

"This way," said the Tracer, smilingly taking the pencil from his fingers, and he wrote: I — NEVER — SAW — YOU — BUT — ONCE. I — LOVE — YOU. EDITH INWOOD.

Then he laid the pencil on the table and walked to the window.

Once or twice he fancied that he heard inco-

herent sounds behind him. And after a while he turned, retracing his steps leisurely. Captain Harren, extremely pink, stood tugging at his short mustache and studying the papers on the desk.

"Well?" inquired the Tracer, amused.

The young man pointed to the translation with unsteady finger. "W-what on earth does that mean?" he demanded shakily. "Who is Edith Inwood? W-what on earth does that cryptogram mean on the window pane in the photograph? How did it come there? It isn't on my window pane, you see!"

The Tracer said quietly: "That is not a photograph of your window."

"What!"

"No, Captain. Here! Look at it closely through this glass. There are sixteen small panes in that sash; now count the panes in your window —eight! Besides, look at that curtain. It is made of some figured stuff like chintz. Now, look at your own curtain yonder! It is of plain velour."

"But—but I took that photograph! She stood there—there by that very window!"

The Tracer leaned over the photograph, examining it through the glass. And, studying it, he

said: "Do you still see *her* in this photograph, Captain Harren?"

"Certainly. Can you not see her?"

"No," murmured the Tracer, "but I see the window which she really stood by when her phantom came here seeking you. And that is sufficient. Come, Captain Harren, we are going out together."

The Captain looked at him earnestly; something in Mr. Keen's eyes seemed to fascinate him.

"You think that — that it's likely we are g-going to see—*her!*" he faltered.

"If I were you," mused the Tracer of Lost Persons, joining the tips of his lean fingers meditatively—"If I were you I should wear a silk hat and a frock coat. It's—it's afternoon, anyhow," he added deprecatingly, "and we are liable to make a call."

Captain Harren turned like a man in a dream and entered his bedroom. And when he emerged he was dressed and groomed with pathetic precision.

"Mr. Keen," he said, "I—I don't know why I am d-daring to hope for all s-sorts of things. Nothing you have said really warrants it. But somehow I'm venturing to cherish an absurd notion that I may s-see her."

"Perhaps," said the Tracer, smiling.

"Mr. Keen! You wouldn't say that if—if there was no chance, would you? You wouldn't dash a fellow's hopes——"

"No, I wouldn't," said Mr. Keen. "I tell you frankly that I expect to find her."

"To-day?"

"We'll see," said Mr. Keen guardedly. "Come, Captain, don't look that way! Courage, sir! We are about to execute a turning movement; but you look like a Russian general on his way to the south front."

Harren managed to laugh; they went out, side by side, descended the elevator, and found a cab at the *porte-cochère.* Mr. Keen gave the directions and followed the Captain into the cab.

"Now," he said, as they wheeled south, "we are first going to visit the Museum of Inscriptions and have this cipher translation verified. Here is the cipher as I copied it. Hold it tightly, Captain; we've only a few blocks to drive."

Indeed they were already nearly there. The hansom drew up in front of a plain granite building wedged in between some rather elaborate private dwelling-houses. Over the door were letters of dull bronze:

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF INSCRIPTIONS

and the two men descended and entered a wide marble hall lined with glass-covered cabinets containing plaster casts of various ancient inscriptions and a few bronze and marble originals. Several female frumps were nosing the exhibits.

An attendant in livery stood in the middle distance. The Tracer walked over to him. "I have an appointment to consult Miss Inwood," he whispered.

"This way, sir," nodded the attendant, and the Tracer signaled the Captain to follow.

They climbed several marble stairways, crossed a rotunda, and entered a room—a sort of library. Beyond was a door which bore the inscription:

ASSISTANT CURATOR

"Now," said the Tracer of Lost Persons in a low voice to Captain Harren, "I am going to ask you to sit here for a few minutes while I interview the assistant curator. You don't mind, do you?"

"No, I don't mind," said Harren wearily, "only, when are we going to begin to search for—*her?*"

"Very soon—I may say extremely soon," said Mr. Keen gravely. "By the way, I think I'll take that sheet of paper on which I copied the cipher. Thank you. I won't be long."

The attendant had vanished. Captain Harren sat down by a window and gazed out into the late afternoon sunshine. The Tracer of Lost Persons, treading softly across the carpeted floor, approached the sanctuary, turned the handle, and walked in, carefully closing the door behind him.

There was a young girl seated at a desk by an open window; she looked up quietly as he entered, then rose leisurely.

"Miss Inwood?"

"Yes."

She was slender, dark-eyed, dark-haired — a lovely, wholesome young creature, gracious and graceful. And that was all—for the Tracer of Lost Persons could not see through the eyes of Captain Harren, and perhaps that is why he was not able to discern a miracle of beauty in the pretty girl who confronted him—no magic and matchless marvel of transcendent loveliness—only a quiet, sweet-faced, dark-eyed young girl whose features and figure were attractive in the manner that youth is always attractive. But then it is a gift of the gods to see through eyes anointed by the gods.

The Tracer touched his gray mustache and bowed; the girl bowed very sweetly.

"You are Mr. Keen," she said; "you have an inscription for me to translate."

"A mystery for young eyes to interpret," he said, smiling. "May I sit here—and tell my story before I show you my inscription?"

"Please do," she said, seating herself at her desk and facing him, one slender white hand supporting the oval of her face.

The Tracer drew his chair a little forward. "It is a curious matter," he said. "May I give you a brief outline of the details?"

"By all means, Mr. Keen."

"Then let me begin by saying that the inscription of which I have a copy was probably scratched upon a window pane by means of a diamond."

"Oh! Then—then it is not an ancient inscription, Mr. Keen."

"The theme is ancient—the oldest theme in the world—love! The cipher is old—as old as King Solomon." She looked up quickly. The Tracer, apparently engrossed in his own story, went on with it. "Three years ago the young girl who wrote this inscription upon the window pane of her—her bedroom, I think it was—fell in love. Do you follow me, Miss Inwood?"

Miss Inwood sat very still—wide, dark eyes fixed on him.

"Fell in love," repeated the Tracer musingly, "not in the ordinary way. That is the point, you

see. No, she fell in love at first sight; fell in love with a young man whom she never before had seen, never again beheld—and never forgot. Do you still follow me, Miss Inwood?"

She made the slightest motion with her lips.

"No," mused the Tracer of Lost Persons, "she never forgot him. I am not sure, but I think she sometimes dreamed of him. She dreamed of him awake, too. Once she inscribed a message to him, cutting it with the diamond in her ring on the window pane——"

A slight sound escaped from Miss Inwood's lips. "I beg your pardon," said the Tracer, "did you say something?"

The girl had risen, pale, astounded, incredulous.

"Who are you?" she faltered. "What has this—this story to do with me?"

"Child," said the Tracer of Lost Persons, "the Seal of Solomon is a splendid mystery. All of heaven and earth are included within its symbol. And more, more than you dream of, more than I dare fathom; and I am an old man, my child—old, alone, with nobody to fear for, nothing to dread, not even the end of all—because I am ready for that, too. Yet I, having nothing on earth to dread, dare not fathom what that symbol may mean, nor what vast powers it may exert on life.

God knows. It may be the very signet of Fate itself; the sign manual of Destiny."

He drew the paper from his pocket, unrolled it, and spread it out under her frightened eyes.

"*That!*" she whispered, steadying herself blindly against the arm he offered. She stood a moment so, then, shuddering, covered her eyes with both hands. The Tracer of Lost Persons looked at her, turned and opened the door.

"Captain Harren!" he called quietly. Harren, pacing the anteroom, turned and came forward. As he entered the door he caught sight of the girl crouching by the window, her face hidden in her hands, and at the same moment she dropped her hands and looked straight at him.

"*You!*" she gasped.

The Tracer of Lost Persons stepped out, closing the door. For a moment he stood there, tall, gaunt, gray, staring vacantly into space.

"She *was* beautiful—when she looked at him," he muttered.

For another minute he stood there, hesitating, glancing backward at the closed door. Then he went away, stooping slightly, his top hat held close against the breast of his tightly buttoned frock coat.

CHAPTER XI

During his first year of wedded bliss, Gatewood cut the club. When Kerns wanted to see him he had to call like other people or, like other people, accept young Mrs. Gatewood's invitations.

"Why," said Gatewood scornfully, "should I, thirty-four years of age and safely married, go to a club? Why should I, at my age, idle with a lot of idlers and listen to stuffy stories from stuffier individuals? Do you think that stale tobacco smoke, and the idiotically reiterated click of billiard balls, and the vacant stare of the fashionably brainless, and the meaningless exchange of banalities with the intellectually aimless have any attractions for me?"

Mrs. Gatewood raised her pretty eyes in silence; Kerns returned her amused gaze rather blankly.

"Clubs!" sniffed Gatewood. "What are clubs but pretexts for wasting time? What mental, what spiritual stimulus can a man expect to find in a club? Why, Kerns, when I look back a year and think what I was, and when I look at you and think what you still are——"

"John," said Mrs. Gatewood softly.

"Oh, he knows it!" insisted her husband, "don't you, Tommy? You know the sort of life you're leading, don't you? You know what a miserable, aimless, selfish, unambitious, pitiable existence an unmarried man leads who lives at his club; don't you?"

"Certainly," said Kerns, blinking into the smiling gaze of Mrs. Gatewood.

"Then why don't you marry?"

But Kerns had risen and was making his adieus with cheerful decision; and Mrs. Gatewood was laughing as she gave him her slender hand.

"Now I know a girl——" began Gatewood; but his wife was still speaking to Kerns, so he circled around them, politely suppressing the excitement of a sudden idea struggling for utterance.

Mrs. Gatewood was saying: "I do wish John would go to his clubs occasionally. Because a man is married is no reason for his losing touch with his clubs——"

"I know a girl," broke in Gatewood excitedly, laying his arm on Kerns's to detain him; but Kerns slid sideways through the door with a smile so noncommittal that Mrs. Gatewood laughed again and, linking her arm in her husband's, faced

partly toward him. This maneuver, and the slightest pressure of her shoulder, obliged her husband to begin a turning movement, so that Kerns might reasonably make his escape in the middle of Gatewood's sentence; which he did with nimble and circumspect agility.

"I—I know a——" began Gatewood desperately, twisting his head over his shoulder, only to hear the deadened patter of his friend's feet over the velvet stair carpet and the subdued clang of the front door.

"Isn't it extraordinary?" he said to his wife. "I've been trying to tell Tommy, every time he comes here, about a girl I know—just the very girl he ought to marry; and something prevents him from listening every time."

The attractive young matron beside him turned her face so that her eyes were directly in line with his.

"Did you ever know any people named Manners?" she asked.

"No. Why?"

"You never knew a girl named Marjorie Manners, did you, John?"

"No. What about her?"

"You never heard Mr. Kerns speak of her, did you, dear?"

"No, never. Tommy doesn't talk about girls."

"You never heard him speak of a Mrs. Stanley?"

"Never. Who are these two women?"

"One and the same, dear. Marjorie Manners married an Englishman named Stanley six years ago. Do you happen to recollect that Mr. Kerns took his vacation in England six years ago?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"He crossed to Southampton with Marjorie and her mother. He didn't know she was going over to be married, and she didn't tell him. She wrote to me about it, though. I was in school at Farmington; she left school to marry—a mere child of eighteen, undeveloped for her age, thin, almost scrawny, with pipe-stem arms and neck, red hair, a very sweet, full-lipped mouth, and gray eyes that were too big for her face."

"Well," said Gatewood with a short laugh, "what about it? You don't think Kerns fell in love with an insect of that genus, do you?"

"Yes, I do," smiled Mrs. Gatewood.

"Nonsense. Besides, what of it? She's married, you say."

"Her [illegible] died of enteric at Ladysmith. She wrote [illegible] she has never remarried. Think

of it, John—in all these years she has never remarried!"

"Oh!" said Gatewood pityingly; "do you really suppose that Tommy Kerns has been nursing a blighted affection all these years without ever giving *me* an inkling? Besides, men don't do that; men don't curl up and blight. Besides, men don't take any stock in big-eyed, flat-chested, red-headed pipe stems. Why do you think that Kerns ever cared for her?"

"I know he did."

"How do you know it?"

"From Marjorie's letters."

"The conceited kid! Well, of all insufferable nerve! A man like Kerns—a man—one of the finest, noblest characters—spiritually, intellectually, physically—a practically faultless specimen of manhood! And a red-headed, spindle-legged—Oh, my! Oh, fizz! Dearest, men don't worship a cage of bones with an eighteen-year-old soul in it—like a nervous canary pecking out at the world!"

"She created a furor in England," observed his wife, smiling.

"Oh, I dare say she might over there. Besides, she's doubtless fattened up since then. But if you suppose for one moment that Tommy could even remember a girl like that——"

Mrs. Gatewood smiled again—the wise, sweet smile of a young matron in whom her husband's closest friend had confided. And after a moment or two the wise smile became more thoughtful and less assured; for that very day the Tracer of Lost Persons had called on her to inquire about a Mrs. Stanley—a new client of his who had recently bought a town house in East Eighty-third Street and a country house on Long Island; and who had applied to him to find her fugitive butler and a pint or two of family jewels. And, after her talk with the Tracer of Lost Persons, Mrs. Gatewood knew that her favorite among all her husband's friends, Mr. Kerns, would never of his own volition go near that same Marjorie Manners who had flirted with him to the very perilous verge before she told him why she was going to England—and who, now a widow, had returned with her five-year-old daughter to dwell once more in the city of her ancestors.

Kerns had said very simply: "She has spoiled women for me—all except you, Mrs. Gatewood. And if Jack hadn't married you——"

"I understand, Mr. Kerns. I'm awfully sorry."

"Don't feel sorry; only, if you can, call Jack off. He's been perfectly possessed to marry me to somebody ever since he married you. And if

I told him why I don't care to consider the matter he wouldn't believe me—he'd spend his life in trying to bring me around. Besides, I couldn't ever tell him about—Marjorie Manners. Anyhow, nothing on earth could ever induce me to look at her again. . . . You say she is now a widow?"

"Yes, Mr. Kerns, and very beautiful."

"Never again," muttered Kerns. "Never! She was homely enough when I asked her to marry me. I don't want to see her; I don't want to know what she looks like. I'm glad she has changed so I wouldn't recognize her, for that means the end of it all—the final elimination of the girl I remember on the ship. . . . It was probably a sort of diseased infatuation, wasn't it, Mrs. Gatewood? Think of it! A few days on shipboard and—and I asked her to marry me! . . . I don't blame her, after all, for letting me dangle. It was an excellent opportunity for her to study a rare species of idiot. She was justified and I am satisfied. Only, do call Jack off with a hint or two."

"I shall try," said young Mrs. Gatewood thoughtfully — very thoughtfully, for already every atom and fiber of her femininity was aroused in behalf of these two estranged young people whom Providence certainly had not meant to put asunder.

CHAPTER XII

"NOTHING," said Gatewood firmly, "can make me believe that Kerns ought not to marry somebody; and I'm never going to let up on him until he does. I'll bet I could fix him for life if I called in the Tracer to help me. Isn't it extraordinary how Kerns has kept out of it all these years?"

The attractive girl beside him turned her face once more so that her clear, sweet eyes were directly in line with his.

"It *is* extraordinary," she said seriously. "I think you ought to drop in at the club some day when you can corner him and bully him."

"I don't want to go to the club," said the infatuated man.

"Why, dear?"

He looked straight at her and she flushed prettily, while a tint of color touched his own face. Which was very nice of him. So she didn't say what she was going to say—that it would be perhaps better for them both if he practiced on her an artistic absence now and then. Younger in

years, she was more mature than he. She knew. But she was too much in love with him to salt their ambrosia with common sense or suggest economy in their use of the nectar bottle.

However, the gods attend to that, and she knew they would, and she let them. So one balmy evening late in May, when the new moon's ghost floated through the upper haze, and the golden Diana above Manhattan turned flame color, and the electric lights began to glimmer along Fifth Avenue, and the first faint scent of the young summer freshened the foliage in square and park, Kerns, stopping at the club for a moment, found Gatewood seated at the same window they both were wont to haunt in earlier and more flippant days.

"Are you dining here?" inquired Kerns, pushing the electric button with enthusiasm. "Well, that's the first glimmer of common sense you've betrayed since you've been married!"

"Dining *here!*" repeated Gatewood. "I should hope not! I am just going home——"

"He's thoroughly cowed," commented Kerns; "every married man you meet at the club is just going home." But he continued to push the button, nevertheless.

Gatewood leaned back in his chair and gazed

about him, nose in the air. "What a life!" he observed virtuously. "It's all I can do to stand it for ten minutes. You're here for the evening, I suppose?" he added pityingly.

"No," said Kerns; "I'm going uptown to Billy Lee's house to get my suit case. His family are out of town, and he is at Seabright, so he let me camp there until the workmen finish papering my rooms upstairs. I'm to lock up the house and send the key to the Burglar Alarm Company to-night. Then I go to Boston on the 12.10. Want to come? There'll be a few doing."

"To Boston! What for?"

"Contracts! We can go out to Cambridge when I've finished my business. There'll be *etwas* doing."

"*Can't* you ever recover from being an undergraduate?" asked Gatewood, disgusted.

"Well—is there anything the matter with a man getting next to a little amusement in life?" asked Kerns. "Do you object to my being happy?"

"Amusement? You don't know how to amuse yourself. You don't know how to be happy. Here you sit, day after day, swallowing Martinis——" He paused to finish his own, then resumed: "Here you sit, day after day, intel-

lectually stultified, unemotionally ignorant of the higher and better life——"

"No, I don't. I've a book upstairs that tells all about that. I read it when I have hold-overs——"

"Kerns, I wish to speak seriously. I've had it on my mind ever since I married. May I speak frankly?"

"Well, when I come back from Boston——"

"Because I know a girl," interrupted Gatewood—"wait a moment, Tommy!"—as Kerns rose and sauntered toward the door—"you've plenty of time to catch your train and be civil, too! I mean to tell you about that girl, if you'll listen."

Kerns halted and turned upon his friend a pair of eyes, unwinking in their placid intelligence.

"I was going to say that I know a girl," continued Gatewood, "who is just the sort of a girl you——"

"No, she isn't!" said Kerns, wheeling to resume his progress toward the cloakroom.

"Tom!"

Kerns halted.

"*You're* a fine specimen!" commented Gatewood scornfully. "You spent the best years of your life in persuading me to get married, and the

first time I try to do the same for you, you make for the tall timber!"

"I know it," admitted Kerns, unashamed; "I'm bashful. I'm a chipmunk for shyness, so I'll say good night——"

"Come back," said Gatewood coldly.

"But my suit case——"

"You left it at the Lee's, didn't you? Well, you've time enough to go there, get it, make your train, and listen to me, too. Look here, Kerns, have you any of the elements of decency about you?"

"No," said Kerns, "not a single element." He seated himself defiantly in the club window facing Gatewood and began to button his gloves. When he had finished he settled his new straw hat more comfortably on his head, and, leaning forward and balancing his malacca walking stick across his knees, gazed at Gatewood with composure.

"Crank up!" he said pleasantly; "I'm going in less than three minutes." He pushed the electric knob as an afterthought, and when the gilt buttons of the club servant glimmered through the dusk, "Two more," he explained briskly. After a few moments' silence, broken by the tinkle of ice in thin glassware, Gatewood leaned forward, menacing his friend with an impressive forefinger:

"Did you or didn't you once tell me that a decent citizen ought to marry?"

"I did, dear friend."

"Did I or didn't I do it?"

"In the words of the classic, you *done* it," admitted Kerns.

"Was I or wasn't I going to the devil before I had the sense to marry?" persisted Gatewood.

"You was! You *was*, dear friend!" said Kerns with enthusiasm. "You had almost went there ere I appeared and saved you."

"Then why shouldn't you marry and let me save you?"

"But I'm not going to the bowwows. *I'm* all right. I'm a decent citizen. I awake in the rosy dawn with a song on my lips; I softly whistle rag time as I button my collar; I warble a few delicious vagrant notes as I part my sparse hair; I'm not murderous before breakfast; I go down town, singing, to my daily toil; I fish for fat contracts in Georgia marble; I return uptown immersed in a holy calm and the evening paper. I offer myself a cocktail; I bow and accept; I dress for dinner with the aid of a rascally valet, but—*do* I swear at him? No, dear friend; I say, 'Henry, I have known far, far worse scoundrels than you. Thank you for filling up my bay rum

with water. Bless you for wearing my imported hosiery! I deeply regret that my new shirts do not fit you, Henry!' And my smile is a benediction upon that wayward scullion. Then, dear friend, why, why do you desire to offer me up upon the altar of unrest? What is a little wifey to me or I to any wifey?"

"Because," said Gatewood irritated, "you offered me up. I'm happy and I want you to be—you great, hulking, self-satisfied symbol of supreme self-centered selfishness——"

"Oh, splash!" said Kerns feebly.

"Yes, you are. What do you do all day? Grub for money and study how to make life agreeable to yourself! Every minute of the day you are occupied in having a good time! You've admitted it! You wake up singing like a fool canary; you wear imported hosiery; you've made a soft, warm wallow for yourself at this club, and here you bask your life away, waddling downtown to nail contracts and cut coupons, and uptown to dinners and theaters, only to return and sprawl here in luxury without one single thought for posterity. *Your* crime is race suicide!"

"I—my—*what*!"

"Certainly. Some shirk taxes, some jury duty.

You shirk fatherhood, and all its happy and sacred obligations! You deny posterity! You strike a blow at it! You flout it! You menace the future of this Republic! Your inertia is a crime against the people! Instead of *pro bono publico* your motto is *pro bono tempo*—for a good time! And, dog Latin or not, it's the truth, and our great President——"

"Splash!" said Kerns, rising.

"I've a good mind," said Gatewood indignantly, "to put the Tracer of Lost Persons on your trail. He'd rope you and tie you in record time!"

Kerns's smile was a provocation.

"I'll do it, too!" added Gatewood, losing his temper, "if you dare give me the chance."

"Seriously," inquired Kerns, delighted, "*do* you think your friend, Mr. Keen, could encompass my matrimony against my better sense and the full enjoyment of my unimpaired mental faculties?"

"Didn't he—fortunately for me—force me into matrimony when I had never seen a woman I would look at twice? Didn't you put him up to it? Very well, why can't I put him on your trail then? Why can't *he* do the same for you?"

"Try it, dear friend," retorted Kerns courteously.

"Do you mean that you are not afraid? Do you mean you give me full liberty to set him on you? And do you realize what that means? No, you don't; for you haven't a notion of what that man, Westrel Keen, can accomplish. You haven't the slightest idea of the machinery which he controls with a delicacy absolutely faultless; with a perfectly terrifying precision. Why, man, the Pinkerton system itself has become merely a detail in the immense complexity of the system of control which the Tracer of Lost Persons exercises over this entire continent. The urban police, the State constabulary of Pennsylvania, the rural systems of surveillance, the Secret Service, all municipal, provincial, State, and national organizations form but a few strands in the universal web he has woven. Custom officials, revenue officers, the militia of the States, the army, the navy, the personnel of every city, State, and national legislative bodies form interdependent threads in the mesh he is master of; and, like a big beneficent spider, he sits in the center of his web, able to tell by the slightest tremor of any thread exactly where to begin investigations!"

Flushed, earnest, a trifle out of breath with his

own eloquence, Gatewood waved his hand to indicate a Ciceronian period, adding, as Kerns's incredulous smile broadened: "Say splash again, and I'll put you at his mercy!"

"Ker-splash! dear friend," observed Kerns pleasantly. "If a man doesn't want to marry, the army, the navy, the Senate, the white wings, and the great White Father at Washington can't make him."

"I tell you I want to see you happy!" said Gatewood angrily.

"Then gaze upon me. I'm it!"

"You're not! You don't know what happiness is."

"Don't I? Well, I don't miss it, dear friend——"

"But if you've never had it, and therefore don't miss it, it's time somebody found some real happiness for you. Kerns, I simply can't bear to see you missing so much happiness——"

"Why grieve?"

"Yes, I will! I do grieve—in spite of your grinning skepticism and your bantering attitude. See here, Tom; I've started about a thousand times to say that I knew a girl——"

"Do you want to hear that splash again?"

Gatewood grew madder. He said: "I could

easily lay your case before Mr. Keen and have you in love and married and happy whether you like it or not!"

"If I were not going to Boston, my son, I should enjoy your misguided efforts," returned Kerns blandly.

"Your going to Boston makes no difference. The Tracer of Lost Persons doesn't care where you go or what you do. If he starts in on your case, Tommy, you can't escape."

"You mean he can catch me now? Here? At my own club? Or on the public highway? Or on the classic Boston train?"

"He *could*. Yes, I firmly believe he could land you before you ever saw the Boston State House. I tell you he can work like lightning, Kerns. I know it; I am so absolutely convinced of it that I—I almost hesitate——"

"Don't feel delicate about it," laughed Kerns; "you may call him on the telephone while I go uptown and get my suit case. Perhaps I'll come back a blushing bridegroom; who knows?"

"If you'll wait here I'll call him up now," said Gatewood grimly.

"Oh, very well. Only I left my suit case in Billy's room, and it's full of samples of Georgia marble, and I've got to get it to the train."

"You've plenty of time. If you'll wait until I talk to Mr. Keen I'll dine with you here. Will you?"

"What? Dine in this abandoned joint with an outcast like me? Dear friend, are you dippy this lovely May evening?"

"I'll do it if you'll wait. Will you? And I'll bet you now that I'll have you in love and sprinting toward the altar before we meet again at this club. Do you dare bet?"

"The terms of the wager, kind friend?" drawled Kerns, delighted; and he fished out a notebook kept for such transactions.

"Let me see," reflected Gatewood; "you'll need a silver service when you're married. . . . Well, say, forks and spoons and things against an imported trap gun—twelve-gauge, you know."

"Done. Go and telephone to your friend, Mr. Keen." And Kerns pushed the electric button with a jeering laugh, and asked the servant for a dinner card

CHAPTER XIII

Gatewood, in the telephone booth, waited impatiently for Mr. Keen; and after a few moments the Tracer of Lost Persons' agreeable voice sounded in the receiver.

"It's about Mr. Kerns," began Gatewood; "I want to see him happy, and the idiot won't be. Now, Mr. Keen, you know what happiness you and he brought to me! You know what sort of an idle, selfish, aimless, meaningless life you saved me from? I want you to do the same for Mr. Kerns. I want to ask you to take up his case at once. Besides, I've a bet on it. Could you attend to it at once?"

"To-night?" asked the Tracer, laughing.

"Why—ah—well, of course, that would be impossible. I suppose——"

"My profession is to overcome the impossible, Mr. Gatewood. Where is Mr. Kerns?"

"Here, in this club, defying me and drinking cocktails. He won't get married, and I want you to make him do it."

"Where is he spending the evening?" asked the Tracer, laughing again.

"Why, he's been stopping at the Danforth Lees' in Eighty-third Street until the workmen at the club here finish putting new paper on his walls. The Lees are out of town. He left his suit case at their house and he's going up to get it and catch the 12.10 train for Boston."

"He goes from the Lenox Club to the residence of Mr. W. Danforth Lee, East Eighty-third Street, to get a suit case," repeated the Tracer. "Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"What is in the suit case?"

"Samples of that new marble he's quarrying in Georgia."

"Is it an old suit case? Has it Mr. Kerns's initials on it?"

"Hold the wire; I'll find out."

And Gatewood left the telephone and walked into the great lounging room, where Kerns sat twirling his stick and smiling to himself.

"All over, dear friend?" inquired Kerns, starting to rise. "I've ordered a corking dinner."

"Wait!" returned Gatewood ominously. "What sort of a suit case is that one you're going after?"

"What sort? Oh, just an ordinary——"

"Is it old or new?"

"Brand new. Why?"

"Is your name on it?"

"No; why? Would that thicken the plot, dear friend? Or is the Tracer foiled, ha! ha!"

Gatewood turned on his heel, went back to the telephone, and, carefully shutting the door of the booth, took up the receiver.

"It's a new suit case, Mr. Keen," he said; "no initials on it—just an ordinary case."

"Mr. Lee's residence is 38 East Eighty-third Street, between Madison and Fifth, I believe."

"Yes," replied Gatewood.

"And the family are out of town?"

"Yes."

"Is there a caretaker there?"

"No; Mr. Kerns camped there. When he leaves to-night he will send the key to the Burglar Alarm Company."

"Very well. Please hold the wire for a while."

For ten full minutes Gatewood sat gleefully cuddling the receiver against his ear. His faith in Mr. Keen was naturally boundless; he believed that whatever the Tracer attempted could not result in failure. He desired nothing in the world so ardently as to see Kerns safely married. His

own happiness may have been the motive power which had set him in action in behalf of his friend —that and a certain indefinable desire to practice a species of heavenly revenge, of grateful retaliation upon the prime mover and *collaborateur*, if not the sole author, of his own wedded bliss. Kerns had made him happy.

"And I'm hanged if I don't pay him off and make him happy, too!" muttered Gatewood. "Does he think I'm going to sit still and see him go tearing and gyrating about town with no responsibility, no moral check to his evolutions, no wholesome home duties to limit his acrobatics, no wife to clip his wings? It's time he had somebody to report to; time he assumed moral burdens and spiritual responsibilities. A man is just as happy when he is certain where he is going to sleep. A man can find just as much enjoyment in life when he feels it his duty to account for his movements. I don't care whether Kerns is comparatively happy or not—there's nothing either sacred or holy in that kind of happiness, and I'm not going to endure the sort of life he likes any longer!"

Immersed in moral reflections, inspired by affectionate obligations to violently inflict happiness upon Kerns, the minutes passed very agreeably

until the amused voice of the Tracer of Lost Persons sounded again in the receiver.

"Mr. Gatewood?"

"Yes, I am here, Mr. Keen."

"Do you really think it best for Mr. Kerns to fall in love?"

"I do, certainly!" replied Gatewood with emphasis.

"Because," continued the Tracer of Lost Persons, "I see little chance for him to do otherwise if I take up this case. Fate itself, in the shape of a young lady, is already on the way here in a railroad train."

"Good! Good!" exclaimed Gatewood. "Don't let him escape, Mr. Keen! I beg of you to take up his case! I urge you most seriously to do so. Mr. Kerns is now exactly what I was a year ago—an utterly useless member of the community—a typical bachelor who lives at his clubs, shirking the duties of a decent citizen."

"*Ex*actly," said the Tracer. "Do you insist that I take this case? That I attempt to trace and find for Mr. Kerns a sort of happiness he himself has never found?"

"I implore you to do so, Mr. Keen."

"*Ex*actly. If I do—if I carry it out as it has been arranged—or rather as the case seems to

have already arranged itself, for it is rather a simple matter, I fancy—I do not exactly see how Mr. Kerns can avoid experiencing a—ahem—a tender sentiment for the very charming young lady whom I—and chance—have designed for him as a partner through life."

"Excellent! Splendid!" shouted Gatewood through the telephone. "Can I do anything to aid you in this?"

"Yes," replied the Tracer, laughing. "If you can keep him amused for an hour or two before he goes after his suit case it might make it easier for me. This young lady is due to arrive in New York at eight o'clock—a client of mine—coming to consult me. Her presence plays an important part in Mr. Kerns's future. I wish you to detain Mr. Kerns until she is ready to receive him. But of this he must know nothing. Good-by, Mr. Gatewood, and would you be kind enough to present my compliments to Mrs. Gatewood?"

"Indeed I will! We never can forget what you have done for us. Good-by."

"Good-by, Mr. Gatewood. Try to keep Mr. Kerns amused for two or three hours. Of course, if you can't do this, there are other methods I may employ—a dozen other plans already partly outlined in my mind; but the present plan, which

accident and coincidence make so easy, is likely to work itself out to your entire satisfaction within a few hours. We are already weaving a web around Mr. Kerns; we already have taken exclusive charge of his future movements after he leaves the Lenox Club. I do not believe he can escape us, or his charming destiny. Good night!"

Gatewood, enchanted, hung up the receiver. Song broke softly from his lips as he started in search of Kerns; his step was springy, buoyant—a sort of subdued and modest prance.

"Now," he said to himself, "Tommy must take out his papers. The time is ended when he can issue letters of marque to himself, hoist sail, square away, and go cruising all over this metropolis at his own sweet will."

CHAPTER XIV

In the meanwhile, at the other end of the wire, Mr. Keen, the Tracer of Lost Persons, was preparing to trace for Mr. Kerns, against that gentleman's will, the true happiness which Mr. Kerns had never been able to find for himself.

He sat in his easy chair within the four walls of his own office, inspecting a line of people who stood before him on the carpet forming a single and attentive rank. In this rank were five men: a policeman, a cab driver, an agent of the telephone company, an agent of the electric company, and a reformed burglar carrying a kit of his trade tools.

The Tracer of Lost Persons gazed at them, meditatively joining the tips of his thin fingers.

"I want the number on 36 East Eighty-third Street changed to No. 38, and the number 38 replaced by No. 36," he said to the policeman. "I want it done at once. Get a glazier and go up there and have it finished in an hour. Mrs. Kenna, caretaker at No. 36, is in my pay; she will not interfere. There is nobody in No. 38: Mr. Kerns

leaves there to-night and the Burglar Alarm Company takes charge to-morrow."

And, turning to the others: "You," nodding at the reformed burglar, "know your duty. Mike!" to the cab driver, "don't miss Mr. Kerns at the Lenox Club. If he calls you before eleven, drive into the park and have an accident. And you," to the agent of the telephone company, "will sever all telephone connection in Mrs. Stanley's house; and you," to the official of the electric company, "will see that the circuit in Mrs. Stanley's house is cut so that no electric light may be lighted and no electric bell sound."

The Tracer of Lost Persons stroked his gray mustache thoughtfully. "And that," he ended, "will do, I think. Good night."

He rose and stood by the door as the policeman headed the solemn file which marched out to their duty; then he looked at his watch, and, as it was already a few minutes after eight, he called up No. 36 East Eighty-third Street, and in a moment more had Mrs. Stanley on the wire.

"Good evening," he said pleasantly. "I suppose you have just arrived from Rosylyn. I may be a little late—I may be very late, in fact, so I called you up to say so. And I wished to say another thing; to ask you whether your servants

could recollect ever having seen a young man about the place, a rather attractive young man with excellent address and manners, five feet eleven inches, slim but well built, dark hair, dark eyes, and dark mustache, offering samples of Georgia marble for sale."

"Really, Mr. Keen," replied a silvery voice, "I have heard them say nothing about such an individual. If you will hold the wire I will ask my maid." And, after a pause: "No, Mr. Keen, my maid cannot remember any such person. Do you think he was a confederate of that wretched butler of mine?"

"I am scarcely prepared to say that; in fact," added Mr. Keen, "I haven't the slightest idea that this young man could have been concerned in anything of that sort. Only, if you should ever by any chance see such a man, detain him if possible until you can communicate with me; detain him by any pretext, by ruse, by force if you can, only detain him until I can get there. Will you do this?"

"Certainly, Mr. Keen, if I can. Please describe him again?"

Mr. Keen did so minutely.

"You say he sells Georgia marble by samples, which he carries in a suit case?"

"He *says* that he has samples of Georgia marble in his suit case," replied the Tracer cautiously. "It might be well, if possible, to see what he has in his suit case."

"I will warn the servants as soon as I return to Rosylyn. When may I expect you this evening, Mr. Keen?"

"It is impossible to say, Mrs. Stanley. If I am not there by midnight I shall try to call next morning."

So they exchanged civil adieus; the Tracer hung up his receiver and leaned back in his chair, smiling to himself.

"Curious," he said, "that chance should have sent that pretty woman to me at such a time. . . . Kerns *is* a fine fellow, every inch of him. It hit him hard when he crossed with her to Southampton six years ago; it hit him harder when she married that Englishman. I don't wonder he never cared to marry after that brief week of her society; for she is just about the most charming woman I have ever met—red hair and all. . . . And if quick action is what is required, it's well to break the ice between them at once with a dreadful misunderstanding."

CHAPTER XV

The dinner that Kerns had planned for himself and Gatewood was an ingenious one, cunningly contrived to discontent Gatewood with home fare and lure him by its seductive quality into frequent revisits to the club which was responsible for such delectable wines and viands.

A genial glow already enveloped Gatewood and pleasantly suffused Kerns. From time to time they held some rare vintage aloft, squinting through the crystal-imprisoned crimson with deep content.

"Not that *my* word is necessarily the *last* word concerning Burgundy," said Gatewood modestly; "but I venture to doubt that any club in America can match this bottle, Kerns."

"Now, Jack," wheedled Kerns, "isn't it pleasant to dine here once in a while? Be frank, man! Look about at the other tables—at all the pleasant, familiar faces—the same fine fellows, bless 'em—the same smoky old ceiling, the same bum portraits of dead governors, the same old stag

heads on the wall. Now, Jack, isn't it mighty pleasant, after all? Be a gentleman and admit it!"

"Y-yes," confessed Gatewood, "it's all right for me once in a while, because I know that I am presently going back to my own home—a jolly lamplit room and the prettiest girl in Manhattan curled up in an armchair——"

"You're fortunate," said Kerns shortly. And for the first time there remained no lurking mockery in his voice; for the first time his retort was tinged with bitterness. But the next instant his eyes glimmered with the same gay malice, and the unbelieving smile twitched at his clean-cut lips, and he raised his hand, touching the short ends of his mustache with that careless, amused cynicism which rather became him.

"All that you picture so entrancingly is forbidden the true believer," he said; and began to repeat:

"'O weaver! weave the flowers of Feraghan
Into the fabric that thy birth began;
Iris, narcissus, tulips cloud-band tied,
These thou shalt picture for the eye of Man;
Henna, Herati, and the Jhelums tide
In Sarraband and Saruk be thy guide,
And the red dye of Ispahan beside

The checkered Chinese fret of ancient gold;
—So heed the ban, old as the law is old,
Nor weave into thy warp the laughing face,
Nor limb, nor body, nor one line of grace,
Nor hint, nor tint, nor any veiled device
Of Woman who is barred from Paradise!' "

"A nice sentiment!" said Gatewood hotly.

"Can't help it; you see I'm forbidden to monkey with the eternal looms or weave the forbidden into the pattern of my life."

Gatewood sat silent for a moment, then looked up at Kerns with something so closely akin to a grin that his friend became interested in its scarcely veiled significance, and grinned in reply.

"So you really expect that your friend, Mr. Keen, is going to marry me to somebody, *nolens volens*?" asked Kerns.

"I do. That's what I dream of, Tommy."

"My poor friend, dream on!"

"I am. Tommy, you're lost! I mean you're as good as married now!"

"You think so?"

"I *know* it! There you sit, savoring your Burgundy, idling over a cigar, happy, care free, fancy free, at liberty, as you believe, to roam off anywhere at any time and continue the eternal hunt for pleasure! That's what you *think*! Ha!

Tommy, I know better! That's not the sort of man *I* see sitting on the same chair where you are now sprawling in such content! I see a doomed man, already in the shadow of the altar, wasting his time unsuspiciously while Chance comes whirling into the city behind a Long Island locomotive, and Fate, the footman, sits outside ready to follow him, and Destiny awaits him no matter what he does, what he desires, where he goes, wherever he turns to-night! Destiny awaits him at his journey's end!"

"Very fine," said Kerns admiringly. "Too bad it's due to the Burgundy."

"Never mind what my eloquence is due to," retorted Gatewood, "the fact remains that this is probably your last bachelor dinner. Kerns, old fellow! Here's to her! Bless her! I—I wish sincerely that we knew who she is and where to send those roses. Anyway, here's to the bride!"

He stood up very gravely and drank the toast, then, reseating himself, tapped the empty glass gently against the table's edge until it broke.

"You are certainly doing your part well," said Kerns admiringly. Then he swallowed the remainder of his Burgundy and looked up at the club clock.

"Eleven," he said with regret. "I've about

time to go to Eighty-third Street, get my suit case, and catch my train at 125th Street." To a servant he said, "Call a hansom," then rose and sauntered downstairs to the cloakroom, where presently both men stood, hatted and gloved, swinging their sticks.

"That was a fool bet you made," began Kerns; "I'll release you, Jack."

"Sorry, but I must insist on holding you," replied Gatewood, laughing. "You're going to your doom. Come on! I'll see you as far as the cab door."

They walked out, and Kerns gave the cabby the street and number and entered the hansom.

"Now," said Gatewood, "you're in for it! You're done for! You can't help yourself! I've won my twelve-gauge trap gun already, and I'll have to set you up in table silver, anyway, so it's an even break. You're all in, Tommy! The Tracer is on your trail!"

In the beginning of a flippant retort Kerns experienced a curious sensation of hesitation. Something in Gatewood's earnestness, in his jeering assurance and delighted certainty, made him, for one moment, feel doubtful, even uncomfortable.

"What nonsense you talk," he said, recovering his equanimity. "Nothing on earth can prevent

me driving to 38 East Eighty-third Street, getting my luggage, and taking the Boston express. Your Tracer doesn't intend to stop my hansom and drag me into a cave, does he? You haven't put knock-outs into that Burgundy, have you? Then what in the dickens are you laughing at?"

But Gatewood, on the sidewalk under the lamplight, was still laughing as Kerns drove away, for he had recognized in the cab driver a man he had seen in Mr. Kern's office, and he knew that the Tracer of Lost Persons had Kerns already well in hand.

The hansom drove on through the summer darkness between rows of electric globes drooping like huge white moon flowers from their foliated bronze stalks, on up the splendid avenue, past the great brilliantly illuminated hotels, past the white cathedral, past clubs and churches and the palaces of the wealthy; on, on along the park wall edged by its double rows of elms under which shadowy forms moved—lovers strolling in couples.

"Pooh," sniffed Kerns, "the whole world has gone love mad, and I'm the only sane man left."

But he leaned back in his cab and fell a-thinking of a thin girl with red hair and great gray eyes —a thin, frail creature, scarcely more than a child, who had held him for a week in a strange

sorcery only to release him with a frightened smile, leaving her indelible impression upon his life forever.

And, thinking, he looked up, realizing that the cab had stopped in East Eighty-third Street before one of a line of brownstone houses, all externally alike.

Then he leaned out and saw that the house number was thirty-eight. That was the number of the Lees' house; he descended, bade the cabman await him, and, producing his latch key, started up the steps, whistling gayly.

But he didn't require his key, for, as he reached the front door, he found, to his surprise and concern, that it swung partly open—just a mere crack.

"The mischief!" he muttered; "could I have failed to close it? Could anybody have seen it and crept in?"

He entered the hallway hastily and pressed the electric knob. No light appeared in the sconces.

"What the deuce!" he murmured; "something wrong with the switch!" And he hurriedly lighted a match and peered into the darkness. By the vague glimmer of the burning match he could distinguish nothing. He listened intently, tried the electric switch again without success. The

match burned his fingers and he dropped it, watching the last red spark die out in the darkness.

Something about the shadowy hallway seemed unfamiliar; he went to the door, stepped out on the stoop, and looked up at the number on the transom. It was thirty-eight; no doubt about the house. Hesitating, he glanced around to see that his hansom was still there. It had disappeared.

"What an idiot that cabman is!" he exclaimed, intensely annoyed at the prospect of lugging his heavy suit case to a Madison Avenue car and traveling with it to Harlem.

He looked up and down the dimly lighted street; east, an electric car glided down Madison Avenue; west, the lights of Fifth Avenue glimmered against the dark foliage of the Park. He stood a moment, angry at the desertion of his cabman, then turned and reëntered the dark hall, closing the door behind him.

Up the staircase he felt his way to the first landing, and, lighting a match, looked for the electric button.

"Am I crazy, or was there no electric button in this hall?" he thought. The match burned low; he had to drop it. Perplexed, he struck another match and opened the door leading into the front room, and stood on the threshold a moment, look-

ing about him at the linen-shrouded furniture and pictures. This front room, closed for the summer, he had not before entered, but he stepped in now, poking about for any possible intruder, lighting match after match.

"I suppose I ought to go over this confounded house inch by inch," he murmured. "What could have possessed me to leave the front door ajar this morning?"

For an instant he thought that perhaps Mrs. Nolan, the woman who came in the morning to make his bed, might have left the door open, but he knew that couldn't be so, because he always waited for her to finish her work and leave before he went out. So either he must have left the door open, or some marauder had visited the house—was perhaps at that moment in the house! And it was his duty to find out.

"I'd better be about it, too," he thought savagely, "or I'll never make my train."

He struck his last match, looked around, and, seeing gas jets among the clustered electric bulbs of the sconces, tried to light one and succeeded.

He had left his suit case in the passageway between the front and rear rooms, and now, cautiously, stick in hand, he turned toward the dim corridor leading to the bedroom. There was his

suit case, anyway! He picked it up and started to push open the door of the rear room; but at the same time, and before he could lay his hand on the knob, the door before him opened suddenly in a flood of light, and a woman stood there, dark against the gas-lit glare, a pistol waveringly extended in the general direction of his head.

CHAPTER XVI

"Good heavens!" he said, appalled, and dropped his suit case with a crash.

"W-what are you d-doing——" She controlled her voice and the wavering weapon with an effort. "What are you doing in this house?"

"Doing? In *this* house?" he repeated, his eyes protruding in the direction of the unsteady pistol muzzle. "What are *you* doing in this house—if you don't mind saying!"

"I—I m-must ask you to put up your hands," she said. "If you move I shall certainly s-shoot off this pistol."

"It will go off, anyway, if you handle it like that!" he said, exasperated. "What do you mean by pointing it at me?"

"I mean to fire it off in a few moments if you don't raise your hands above your head!"

He looked at the pistol; it was new and shiny; he looked at the athletic young figure silhouetted against the brilliant light.

"Well, if you make a point of it, of course."

He slowly held up both hands, higher, then higher still. "Upon my word!" he breathed. "Held up by a woman!" And he said aloud, bitterly: "No doubt you have assistance close at hand."

"No doubt," she said coolly. "What have you been packing into that valise?"

"P-packing into *what?* Oh, into that suit case? That is my suit case."

"Of course it is," she said quietly, "but what have you inside it?"

"Nothing *you* or your friends would care for," he said meaningly.

"I must be the judge of that," she retorted. "Please open that suit case."

"How can I if my hands are in the air?" he expostulated, now intensely interested in the novelty of being held up by this graceful and vaguely pretty silhouette.

"You may lower your arms to unpack the suit case," she said.

"I—I had rather not if you are going to keep me covered with your pistol."

"Of course I shall keep you covered. Unpack your booty at once!"

"My—*what?*"

"Booty."

"Madam, do you take *me* for a thief? Have you, by chance, entered the wrong house? I—I cannot reconcile your voice with what I am forced to consider you—a housebreaker——"

"We will discuss that later. Unpack that bag!" she insisted.

"But—but there is nothing in it except samples of marble——"

"What!" she exclaimed nervously. "*What* did you say? Samples of *marble?*"

"Marble, madam! Georgia marble!"

"Oh! So *you* are the young man who goes about pretending to peddle Georgia marble from samples! Are you? The famous marble man I have heard of."

"I? Madam, I don't know what you mean!"

"Come! she said scornfully; "let me see the contents of that suit case. I—I am not afraid of you; I am not a bit afraid of you. And I shall catch your accomplice, too."

"Madam, you speak like an honest woman! You *must* have managed to enter the wrong house. This is number thirty-eight, where I live."

"It is number thirty-six; my house!"

"But I *know* it is number thirty-eight; Mr. Lee's house," he protested hopefully. "This is some dreadful mistake."

"Mr. Lee's house is next door," she said. "Do you not suppose I know my own house? Besides, I have been warned against a plausible young man who pretends he has Georgia marble to sell——"

"There is a dreadful mistake somewhere," he insisted. "Please p-p-put up your p-pistol and aid me to solve it. I am no robber, madam. I thought at first that you were. I'm living in Mr. Lee's house, No. 38 East Eighty-third Street, and I've looked carefully at the number over the door of this house and the number is thirty-eight, and the street is East Eighty-third. So I naturally conclude that I am in Mr. Lee's house."

"Your arguments and your conclusions are very plausible," she said, "but, fortunately for me, I have been expressly warned against a young man of your description. *You* are the marble man!"

"It's a mistake! A very dreadful one."

"Then how did you enter this house?"

"I have a key—I mean I found the front door unlatched. Please don't misunderstand me; I know it sounds unconvincing, but I really have a key to number thirty-eight."

He attempted to reach for his pocket and the pistol glittered in his face.

"Won't you let me prove my innocence?" he asked.

"You can't prove it by showing me a key. Besides, it's probably a weapon. Anyhow, if, as you pretend, you have managed to get into the wrong house, why did you bring that suit case up here?"

"It was here. It's mine. I left it here in this passageway."

"In *my* house?" she asked incredulously.

"In number thirty-eight; that is all I know. I'll open the suit case if you will let me. I have already described its contents. If it has samples of marble in it you *must* be convinced!"

"It will convince me that it is your valise. But what of that? I know it is yours already," she said defiantly. "I know, at least, that you are the marble man—if nothing worse!"

"But malefactors don't go about carrying samples of Georgia marble," he protested, dropping on one knee under the muzzle of her revolver and tugging at the straps and buckles. In a second or two he threw open the case—and the sight of the contents staggered him. For there, thrown in pellmell among small square blocks of polished marble was a complete kit of burglar's tools, including also a mask, a dark lantern, and a blackjack.

"What-w-w-what on earth is this?" he stammered. "These things don't belong to me. I won't have them! I don't want them. Who put them into my suit case? How the deuce——"

"You *are* the marble man!" she said with a shudder. "Your crimes are known! Your wretched accomplice will be caught! You are the marble man—or something worse!"

Kneeling there, aghast, bewildered, he passed his hand across his eyes as though to clear them from some terrible vision. But the suit case was still there with its incriminating contents when he looked again.

"I am sorry for you," she said tremulously. "I—if it were not for the marble—I would let you go. But you are the marble man!"

"Yes, and I'm probably a madman, too. I don't know what I am! I don't know what is happening to me. I ought to be going, that is all I know——"

"I cannot let you go."

"But I must! I've got to catch a train."

The feebleness of his excuse chilled her pity.

"I shall not let you go," she said, resting the hand which held the pistol on her hip, but keeping him covered. "I know you came to rob my house; I know you are a thoroughly bad and depraved

young man, but for all that I could find it in my heart to let you go if you were not also the *marble man!*"

"What on earth is the marble man?" he asked, exasperated.

"I don't know. I have been earnestly warned against him. Probably he is a relative of my butler——"

"I'm not a relative of anybody's butler!"

"You *say* you are not. How do I know? I—I will make you an offer. I will give you one last chance. If you will return to me the jewels that my butler took——"

"Good heavens, madam! Do you really take me for a professional burglar?"

"How can I help it?" she said indignantly. "Look at your suit case full of lanterns and masks—full of *marble*, too!"

Speechless, he stared at the burglar's kit.

"I am sorry——" Her voice had altered again to a tremulous sweetness. "I can't help feeling sorry for you. You do not seem to be hardened; your voice and manner are not characteristically criminal. I—I can't see your face very clearly, but it does not seem to be a brutally inhuman face——"

An awful desire to laugh seized Kerns; he strug-

gled against it; hysteria lay that way; and he covered his face with both hands and pinched himself.

She probably mistook the action for the emotion of shame and despair born of bitter grief; perhaps of terror of the law. It frightened her a little, but pity dominated. She could scarcely endure to do what she must do.

"This is dreadful, dreadful!" she faltered. "If you only would give me back my jewels——"

Sounds, hastily smothered, escaped him. She believed them to be groans, and it made her slightly faint.

"I—I've simply got to telephone for the police," she said pityingly. "I must ask you to sit down there and wait—there is a chair. Sit there—and please don't move, for I—this has unnerved me—I am not accustomed to doing cruel things; and if you should move too quickly or attempt to run away I feel certain that this pistol would explode."

"Are you going to telephone?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

She backed away, cautiously, pistol menacing him, reached for the receiver, and waited for Central. She waited a long time before she realized that the telephone as well as the electric light was out of commission.

"Did *you* cut all these wires?" she demanded angrily.

"I? What wires?"

She reached out and pressed the electric button which should have rung a bell in her maid's bedroom on the top floor. She kept her finger on the button for ten minutes. It was useless.

"You laid deliberate plans to rob this house," she said, her cheeks pink with indignation. "I am not a bit sorry for you. I shall *not* let you go! I shall sit here until somebody comes to my assistance, if I have to sit here for weeks and weeks!"

"If you'd let me telephone to my club——" he began.

"Your club! You are very plausible. You didn't offer to call up any club until you found that the telephone was not working!"

He thought a moment. "I don't suppose you would trust me to go out and get a policeman?"

"Certainly not."

"Or go into the front room and open a window and summon some passer-by?"

"How do I know you haven't confederates waiting outside?"

"That's true," he said seriously.

There was a silence. Her nerves seemed to trouble her, for she began to pace to and fro in

front of the passageway where he sat comfortably on his chair, arms folded, one knee dropped over the other.

The light being behind her he could not as yet distinguish her features very clearly. Her figure was youthful, slender, yet beautifully rounded; her head charming in contour. He watched her restlessly walking on the floor, small hand clutching the pistol resting on her hip.

The ruddy burnished glimmer on the edges of her hair he supposed, at first, was caused by the strong light behind her.

"This is atrocious!" she murmured, halting to confront him. "How dared you sever every electric connection in my house?"

As she spoke she stepped backward a pace or two, resting herself for a moment against the footboard of the bed—full in the gaslight. And he saw her face.

For a moment he studied her; an immense wave of incredulity swept over him—of wild unbelief, slowly changing to the astonishment of dawning conviction. Astounded, silent, he stared at her from his shadowy corner; and after a while his pulses began to throb and throb and hammer, and the clamoring confusion of his senses seemed to deafen him.

She rested a moment or two against the footboard of the bed, her big gray eyes fixed on his vague and shadowy form.

"This won't do," she said.

"No," he said, "it won't do."

He spoke very quietly, very gently. She detected the alteration in his voice and started slightly, as though the distant echo of a familiar voice had sounded.

"What did you say?" she asked, coming nearer, pistol glittering in advance.

"I said 'It won't do.' I don't know what I meant by it. If I meant anything I was wrong. It *will* do. The situation is perfectly agreeable to me."

"Insolence will not help you," she said sharply. And under the sharpness he detected the slightest quaver of a new alarm.

"I am going to free myself," he said coolly.

"If you move I shall certainly shoot!" she retorted.

"I am going to move—but only my lips. I have only to move my lips to free myself."

"I should scarcely advise you to trust to your eloquence. I have been duly warned, you see."

"Who warned you?" he asked curiously. And, as she disdained to reply: "Never mind. We can

clear that up later. Now let me ask you something."

"You are scarcely in a position to ask questions," she said.

"May I not speak to you?"

"Is it necessary?"

He thought a moment. "No, not necessary. Nothing is in this life, you know. I thought differently once. Once—when I was younger—six years younger—I thought happiness was necessary. I found that a man might live without it."

She stood gazing at him through the shadows, pistol on hip.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean that happiness is not necessary to life. Life goes on all the same. My life has continued for six years without that happiness which some believe to be essential."

After a silence she said: "I can tell by the way you speak that you are well born. I—I dread to do what I simply must do."

He, too, sat silent a long time—long enough for an utterly perverse and whimsical humor to take complete possession of him.

"*Won't* you let me go—*this* time?" he pleaded.

"I cannot."

"You had better let me go while you can," he

said, "because, perhaps, you may find it difficult to get rid of me later."

Affronted, she shrank back from the doorway and stood in the center of her room, angry, disdainful, beautiful, under the ruddy glory of her lustrous hair.

His perverse mood changed, too; he leaned forward, studying her minutely—the splendid gray eyes, the delicate mouth and nose, the full, sweet lips, the witchery of wrist and hand, and the flowing, rounded outline of limb and body under the pretty gown. Could this be *she?* This lovely, mature woman, wearing scarcely a trace of the young girl he had never forgotten—scarcely a trace save in the beauty of her eyes and hair—save in the full, red mouth, sweet and sensitive even in its sudden sullenness?

"Once," he said, and his voice sounded to him like voices heard in dreams—"once, years and years ago, there was a steamer, and a man and a young girl on board. Do you mind my telling you about it?"

She stood leaning against the footboard of the bed, not even deigning to raise her eyes in reply. So he made the slightest stir in his chair; and then she looked up quickly enough, pistol poised.

"The steamer," said Kerns slowly, "was com-

ing into Southampton—six years ago. On deck these two people stood—a man of twenty-eight, a girl of eighteen—six years ago. The name of the steamer was the *Carnatic*. Did you ever hear of that ship?"

She was looking at him attentively. He waited for her reply; she made none; and he went on.

"The man had asked the girl something—I don't know what—I don't know why her gray eyes filled with tears. Perhaps it was because she could not do what the man asked her to do. It may have been to love him; it may have been that he was asking her to marry him and that she couldn't. Perhaps that is why there were tears in her eyes—because she may have been sorry to cause him the pain of refusal—sorry, perhaps, perhaps a little guilty. Because she must have seen that he was falling in love with her, and she—she let him—knowing all the time that she was to marry another man. Did you ever hear of that man before?"

She had straightened up, quivering, wide eyed, lips parted. He rose and walked slowly into her room, confronting her under the full glare of light.

Her pistol fell clattering to the floor. It did not explode because it was not loaded.

"Now," he said unsteadily, "will you give me my freedom? I have waited for it—not minutes—but years—six years. I ask it now—the freedom I enjoyed before I ever saw you. Can you give it back to me? Can you restore to me a capacity for happiness? Can you give me a heart to love with—love some woman, as other men love? Is it very much I ask of you—to give me a chance in life—the chance I had before I ever saw you?"

Her big gray eyes seemed fascinated; he looked deep into them, smiling; and she turned white.

"Will you give me what I ask?" he said, still smiling.

She strove to speak; she could not, but her eyes never faltered. Suddenly the color flooded her neck and cheeks to the hair, and the quick tears glimmered.

"I—I did not understand; I was too young to be cruel," she faltered. "How could I know what I was doing? Or what—what you did?"

"I? To *you?*"

"Y-yes. Did you think that I escaped heart free? Do you realize what *my* punishment was—to—to marry—and *remember!* If I was too young, too inexperienced to know what I was doing, I was not too young to suffer for it!"

"You mean——" He strove to control his voice, but the sweet, fearless gray eyes met his; the old flame leaped in his veins. He reached out to steady himself and his hand touched hers—that soft, white hand that had held him all these years in the hollow of its palm.

"Did you *ever* love me?" he demanded.

Her eyes, wet with tears, met his straight as the starry gaze of a child.

"Yes," she said.

His hand tightened over hers; she swayed a moment, quivering from head to foot; then drawing a quick, sobbing breath, closed her eyes, imprisoned in his arms; and, after a long while, aroused, she looked up at him, her divine eyes unclosing dreamily.

"Somebody is hammering at the front door," he breathed. "Listen!"

"I hear. I believe it must be the Tracer of Lost Persons."

"What?"

"Only a Mr. Keen."

"O Lord!" said Kerns faintly, and covered his face with her fragrant hands.

Very tenderly, very gravely, she drew her hands away, and, laying them on his shoulders, looked up at him.

"You—you know what there is in your suit case," she faltered; "*are* you a burglar, dear?"

"Ask the Tracer of Lost Persons," said Kerns gently, "what sort of a criminal I am!"

They stood together for one blissful moment listening to the loud knocking below, then, hand in hand, they descended the dark stairway to admit the Tracer of Lost Persons.

CHAPTER XVII

On the thirteenth day of March, 1906, Kerns received the following cable from an old friend:

"Is there anybody in New York who can find two criminals for me? I don't want to call in the police.

"J. T. Burke."

To which Kerns replied promptly:

"Wire Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons, N. Y."

And a day or two later, being on his honeymoon, he forgot all about his old friend Jack Burke.

On the fifteenth day of March, 1906, Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons, received the following cablegram from Alexandria, Egypt:

"*Keen, Tracer, New York*:—Locate Joram Smiles, forty, stout, lame, red hair, ragged red mustache, cast in left eye, pallid skin; carries one crutch; supposed to have arrived in America per S. S. *Scythian Queen*, with man known as Emanuel Gandon, swarthy, short, fat, light bluish eyes, Eurasian type.

"I will call on you at your office as soon as my steamer, *Empress of Babylon*, arrives. If you discover my men,

keep them under surveillance, but on no account call in police. Spare no expense. Dundas, Gray & Co. are my bankers and reference.

"JOHN TEMPLETON BURKE."

On Monday, April 2d, a few minutes after eight o'clock in the morning, the card of Mr. John Templeton Burke was brought to Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons, and a moment later a well-built, wiry, sun-scorched young man was ushered into Mr. Keen's private office by a stenographer prepared to take minutes of the interview.

The first thing that the Tracer of Lost Persons noted in his visitor was his mouth; the next his eyes. Both were unmistakably good—the eyes which his Creator had given him looked people squarely in the face at every word; the mouth, which a man's own character fashions agreeably or mars, was pleasant, but firm when the trace of the smile lurking in the corners died out.

There were dozens of other external characteristics which Mr. Keen always looked for in his clients; and now the rapid exchange of preliminary glances appeared to satisfy both men, for they advanced toward each other and exchanged a formal hand clasp.

"Have you any news for me?" asked Burke.

"I have," said the Tracer. "There are cigars

on the table beside you—matches in that silver case. No, I never smoke; but I like the aroma—and I like to watch men smoke. Do you know, Mr. Burke, that no two men smoke in the same fashion? There is as much character in the manner of holding a cigar as there is difference in the technic of artists."

Burke nodded, amused, but, catching sight of the busy stenographer, his bronzed features became serious, and he looked at Mr. Keen inquiringly.

"It is my custom," said the Tracer. "Do you object to my stenographer?"

Burke looked at the slim young girl in her black gown and white collar and cuffs. Then, very simply, he asked her pardon for objecting to her presence, but said that he could not discuss his case if she remained. So she rose, with a humorous glance at Mr. Keen; and the two men stood up until she had vanished, then reseated themselves *vis-a-vis*. Mr. Keen calmly dropped his elbow on the concealed button which prepared a hidden phonograph for the reception of every word that passed between them.

"What news have you for me, Mr. Keen?" asked the younger man with that same directness which the Tracer had already been prepared for,

and which only corroborated the frankness of eyes and voice.

"My news is brief," he said. "I have both your men under observation."

"Already?" exclaimed Burke, plainly unprepared. "Do you actually mean that I can see these men whenever I desire to do so? Are these scoundrels in this town—within pistol shot?"

His youthful face hardened as he snapped out his last word, like the crack of a whip.

"I don't know how far your pistol carries," said Mr. Keen. "Do you wish to swear out a warrant?"

"No, I do not. I merely wish their addresses. You have not used the police in this matter, have you, Mr. Keen?"

"No. Your cable was explicit," said the Tracer. "Had you permitted me to use the police it would have been much less expensive for you."

"I can't help that," said the young man. "Besides, in a matter of this sort, a man cannot decently consider expense."

"A matter of what sort?" asked the Tracer blandly.

"Of *this* sort."

"Oh! Yet even now I do not understand.

You must remember, Mr. Burke, that you have not told me anything concerning the reasons for your quest of these two men, Joram Smiles and Emanuel Gandon. Besides, this is the first time you have mentioned pistol range."

Burke, smoking steadily, looked at the Tracer through the blue fog of his cigar.

"No," he said, "I have not told you anything about them."

Mr. Keen waited a moment; then, smiling quietly to himself, he wrote down the present addresses of Joram Smiles and Emanuel Gandon, and, tearing off the leaf, handed it to the younger man, saying: "I omit the pistol range, Mr. Burke."

"I am very grateful to you," said Burke. "The efficiency of your system is too famous for me to venture to praise it. All I can say is 'Thank you'; all I can do in gratitude is to write my check—if you will be kind enough to suggest the figures."

"Are you sure that my services are ended?"

"Thank you, quite sure."

So the Tracer of Lost Persons named the figures, and his client produced a check book and filled in a check for the amount. This was presented and received with pleasant formality.

Burke rose, prepared to take his leave, but the Tracer was apparently busy with the combination lock of a safe, and the young man lingered a moment to make his adieus.

As he stood waiting for the Tracer to turn around he studied the writing on the sheet of paper which he held toward the light:

Joram Smiles, no profession, 613 West 24th Street.
Emanuel Gandon, no profession, same address.
Very dangerous men.

It occurred to him that these three lines of pencil-writing had cost him a thousand dollars—and at the same instant he flushed with shame at the idea of measuring the money value of anything in such a quest as this.

And yet—and yet he had already spent a great deal of money in his brief quest, and—*was* he any nearer the goal—even with the penciled addresses of these two men in his possession? Even with these men almost within pistol shot!

Pondering there, immersed in frowning retrospection, the room, the Tracer, the city seemed to fade from his view. He saw the red sand blowing in the desert; he heard the sickly squealing of camels at the El Teb Wells; he saw the sun

strike fire from the rippling waters of Saïs; he saw the plain, and the ruins high above it; and the odor of the Long Bazaar smote him like a blow, and he heard the far call to prayer from the minarets of Sa-el-Hagar, once Saïs, the mysterious —Saïs of the million lanterns, Saïs of that splendid festival where the Great Triad's worship swayed dynasty after dynasty, and where, through the hot centuries, Isis, veiled, impassive, looked out upon the hundredth king of kings, Meris, the Builder of Gardens, dragged dead at the chariot of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Slowly the visions faded; into his remote eyes crept the consciousness of the twentieth century again; he heard the river whistles blowing, and the far dissonance of the streets—that iron undertone vibrating through the metropolis of the West from river to river and from the Palisades to the sea.

His gaze wandered about the room, from telephone desk to bookcase, from the table to the huge steel safe, door ajar, swung outward like the polished breech of a twelve-inch gun.

Then his vacant eyes met the eyes of the Tracer of Lost Persons, almost helplessly. And for the first time the full significance of this quest he had undertaken came over him like despair — this

strange, hopeless, fantastic quest, blindly, savagely pursued from the sand wastes of Saïs to the wastes of this vast arid city of iron and masonry, ringing to the sky with the menacing clamor of its five monstrous boroughs.

Curiously weary of a sudden, he sat down, resting his head on one hand. The Tracer watched him, bent partly over his desk. From moment to moment he tore minute pieces from the blotter, or drew imaginary circles and arabesques on his pad with an inkless pen.

"Perhaps I could help you, after all—if you'd let me try," he said quietly.

"Dou you mean—*me*?" asked Burke, without raising his head.

"If you like—yes, you—or any man in trouble—in perplexity—in the uncertain deductions which arise from an attempt at self-analysis."

"It is true; I am trying to analyze myself. I believe that I don't know how. All has been mere impulse—so far. No, I don't know how to analyze it all."

"I do," said the Tracer.

Burke raised his level, unbelieving eyes.

"You are in love," said the Tracer.

After a long time Burke looked up again. "Do you think so?"

"Yes. Can I help you?" asked the Tracer pleasantly.

The young man sat silent, frowning into space; then:

"I tell you plainly enough that I have come here to argue with two men at the end of a pistol; and—you tell me I'm in love. By what logic——"

"It is written in your face, Mr. Burke—in your eyes, in every feature, every muscle's contraction, every modulation of your voice. My tables, containing six hundred classified superficial phenomena peculiar to all human emotions, have been compiled and scientifically arranged according to Bertillon's system. It is an absolutely accurate key to every phase of human emotion, from hate, through all its amazingly paradoxical phenomena, to love, with all its genera under the suborder — all its species, subspecies, and varieties."

He leaned back, surveying the young man with kindly amusement.

"You talk of pistol range, but you are thinking of something more fatal than bullets, Mr. Burke. You are thinking of love—of the first, great, absorbing, unreasoning passion that has ever shaken you, blinded you, seized you and dragged you out of the ordered path of life, to push you violently

into the strange and unexplored! That is what stares out on the world through those haunted eyes of yours, when the smile dies out and you are off your guard; that is what is hardening those flat, clean bands of muscle in jaw and cheek; that is what those hints of shadow mean beneath the eye, that new and delicate pinch to the nostril, that refining, almost to sharpness, of the nose, that sensitive edging to the lips, and the lean delicacy of the chin."

He bent slightly forward in his chair.

"There is all that there, Mr. Burke, and something else—the glimmering dawn of desperation."

"Yes," said the other, "that is there. I am desperate."

"*Ex*actly. Also you wear two revolvers in a light, leather harness strapped up under your armpits," said the Tracer, laughing. "Take them off, Mr. Burke. There is nothing to be gained in shooting up Mr. Smiles or converting Mr. Gandon into nitrates."

"If it is a matter where one man can help another," the Tracer added simply, "it would give me pleasure to place my resources at your command—without recompense——"

"Mr. Keen!" said Burke, astonished.

"Yes?"

"You are very amiable; I had not wished—had not expected anything except professional interest from you."

"Why not? I like you, Mr. Burke."

The utter disarming candor of this quiet, elderly gentleman silenced the younger man with a suddenness born of emotions long crushed, long relentlessly mastered, and which now, in revolt, shook him fiercely in every fiber. All at once he felt very young, very helpless in the world—that same world through which, until within a few weeks, he had roved so confidently, so arrogantly, challenging man and the gods themselves in the pride of his strength and youth.

But now, halting, bewildered, lost amid the strange maze of byways whither impulse had lured and abandoned him, he looked out into a world of wilderness and unfamiliar stars and shadow shapes undreamed of, and he knew not which way to turn—not even how to return along the ways his impetuous feet had trodden in this strange and hopeless quest of his.

"How can you help me?" he said bluntly, while the quivering undertone rang in spite of him. "Yes, I am in love; but how can any living man help me?"

"Are you in love with the dead?" asked the

Tracer gravely. "For that only is hopeless. Are you in love with one who is not living?"

"Yes."

"You love one whom you know to be dead?"

"Yes; dead."

"How do you know that she is dead?"

"That is not the question. I knew that when I fell in love with her. It is not that which appals me; I ask nothing more than to live my life out loving the dead. I—I ask very little."

He passed his unsteady hand across his dry lips, across his eyes and forehead, then laid his clinched fist on the table.

"Some men remain constant to a memory; some to a picture—sane, wholesome, normal men. Some men, with a fixed ideal, never encounter its facsimile, and so never love. There is nothing strange, after all, in this; nothing abnormal, nothing unwholesome. Grünwald loved the marble head and shoulders of the lovely Amazon in the Munich Museum; he died unmarried, leaving the charities and good deeds of a blameless life to justify him. Sir Henry Guest, the great surgeon who worked among the poor without recompense, loved Gainsborough's 'Lady Wilton.' The portrait hangs above his tomb in St. Clement's Hundreds. D'Epernay loved Mlle. Jeanne Vaca-

resco, who died before he was born. And I—I love in my own fashion."

His low voice rang with the repressed undertone of excitement; he opened and closed his clinched hand as though controlling the lever of his emotions.

"What can you do for a man who loves the shadow of Life?" he asked.

"If you love the shadow because the substance has passed away—if you love the soul because the dust has returned to the earth as it was——"

"It has *not*!" said the younger man.

The Tracer said very gravely: "It is written that whenever 'the Silver Cord' is loosed, 'then shall the dust return unto the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto Him who gave it.'"

"The spirit—yes; *that* has taken its splendid flight——"

His voice choked up, died out; he strove to speak again, but could not. The Tracer let him alone, and bent again over his desk, drawing imaginary circles on the stained blotter, while moment after moment passed under the tension of that fiercest of all struggles, when a man sits throttling his own soul into silence.

And, after a long time, Burke lifted a haggard

face from the cradle of his crossed arms and shook his shoulders, drawing a deep, steady breath.

"Listen to *me*!" he said in an altered voice.

And the Tracer of Lost Persons nodded.

CHAPTER XVIII

"When I left the Point I was assigned to the colored cavalry. They are good men; we went up Kettle Hill together. Then came the Philippine troubles, then that Chinese affair. Then I did staff duty, and could not stand the inactivity and resigned. They had no use for me in Manchuria; I tired of waiting, and went to Venezuela. The prospects for service there were absurd; I heard of the Moorish troubles and went to Morocco. Others of my sort swarmed there; matters dragged and dragged, and the Kaiser never meant business, anyway.

"Being independent, and my means permitting me, I got some shooting in the back country. This all degenerated into the merest nomadic wandering — nothing but sand, camels, ruins, tents, white walls, and blue skies. And at last I came to the town of Sa-el-Hagar."

His voice died out; his restless, haunted eyes became fixed.

"Sa-el-Hagar, once ancient Saïs," repeated the

Tracer quietly; and the young man looked at him.

"You know *that*?"

"Yes," said the Tracer.

For a while Burke remained silent, preoccupied, then, resting his chin on his hand and speaking in a curiously monotonous voice, as though repeating to himself by rote, he went on:

"The town is on the heights—have you a pencil? Thank you. Here is the town of Sa-el-Hagar, here are the ruins, here is the wall, and somewhere hereabouts should be the buried temple of Neith, which nobody has found." He shifted his pencil. "Here is the lake of Saïs; here, standing all alone on the plain, are those great monolithic pillars stretching away into perspective—four hundred of them in all—a hundred and nine still upright. There were one hundred and ten when I arrived at El Teb Wells."

He looked across at the Tracer, repeating: "One hundred and ten—when I arrived. One fell the first night—a distant pillar far away on the horizon. Four thousand years had it stood there. And it fell—the first night of my arrival. I heard it; the nights are cold at El Teb Wells, and I was lying awake, all a-shiver, counting the stars to make me sleep. And very, very far away

in the desert I heard and felt the shock of its fall —the fall of forty centuries under the Egyptian stars."

His eyes grew dreamy; a slight glow had stained his face.

"Did you ever halt suddenly in the Northern forests, listening, as though a distant voice had hailed you? Then you understand why that far, dull sound from the dark horizon brought me to my feet, bewildered, listening, as though my own name had been spoken.

"I heard the wind in the tents and the stir of camels; I heard the reeds whispering on Saïs Lake and the yap-yap of a shivering jackal; and always, always, the hushed echo in my ears of my own name called across the star-lit waste.

"At dawn I had forgotten. An Arab told me that a pillar had fallen; it was all the same to me, to him, to the others, too. The sun came out hot. I like heat. My men sprawled in the tents; some watered, some went up to the town to gossip in the bazaar. I mounted and cast bridle on neck—you see how much I cared where I went! In two hours we had completed a circle—like a ruddy hawk above El Teb. And my horse halted beside the fallen pillar."

As he spoke his language had become very sim-

ple, very direct, almost without accent, and he spoke slowly, picking his way with that lack of inflection, of emotion characteristic of a child reading a new reader.

"The column had fallen from its base, eastward, and with its base it had upheaved another buried base, laying bare a sort of cellar and a flight of stone steps descending into darkness.

"Into this excavation the sand was still running in tiny rivulets. Listening, I could hear it pattering far, far down into the shadows.

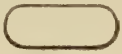
"Sitting there in the saddle, the thing explained itself as I looked. The fallen pillar had been built upon older ruins; all Egypt is that way, ruin founded on the ruin of ruins—like human hopes.

"The stone steps, descending into the shadow of remote ages, invited me. I dismounted, walked to the edge of the excavation, and, kneeling, peered downward. And I saw a wall and the lotus-carved rim of a vast stone-framed pool; and as I looked I heard the tinkle of water. For the pillar, falling, had unbottled the ancient spring, and now the stone-framed lagoon was slowly filling after its drought of centuries.

"There was light enough to see by, but, not knowing how far I might penetrate, I returned to

my horse, pocketed matches and candles from the saddlebags, and, returning, started straight down the steps of stone.

"Fountain, wall, lagoon, steps, terraces half buried—all showed what the place had been: a water garden of ancient Egypt—probably royal—because, although I am not able to decipher hieroglyphics, I have heard somewhere that these picture inscriptions, when inclosed in a cartouch like this"—he drew rapidly—



"or this

indicate that the subject of the inscription was once a king.

"And on every wall, every column, I saw the insignia of ancient royalty, and I saw strange hawk-headed figures bearing symbols engraved on stone—beasts, birds, fishes, unknown signs and symbols; and everywhere the lotus carved in stone—the bud, the blossom half-inclosed, the perfect flower."

His dreamy eyes met the gaze of the Tracer, unseeing; he rested his sunburned face between

both palms, speaking in the same vague monotone:

"Everywhere dust, ashes, decay, the death of life, the utter annihilation of the living—save only the sparkle of reborn waters slowly covering the baked bed of the stone-edged pool—strange, luminous water, lacking the vital sky tint, enameled with a film of dust, yet, for all that, quickening with imprisoned brilliancy like an opal.

"The slow filling of the pool fascinated me; I stood I know not how long watching the thin film of water spreading away into the dimness beyond. At last I turned and passed curiously along the wall where, at its base, mounds of dust marked what may have been trees. Into these I probed with my riding crop, but discovered nothing except the depths of the dust.

"When I had penetrated the ghost of this ancient garden for a thousand yards the light from the opening was no longer of any service. I lighted a candle; and its yellow rays fell upon a square portal into which led another flight of steps. And I went down.

"There were eighteen steps descending into a square stone room. Strange gleams and glimmers from wall and ceiling flashed dimly in my eyes under the wavering flame of the candle. Then the

flame grew still—still as death—and Death lay at my feet—there on the stone floor—a man, square shouldered, hairless, the cobwebs of his tunic mantling him, lying face downward, arms outflung.

"After a moment I stooped and touched him, and the entire prostrate figure dissolved into dust where it lay, leaving at my feet a shadow shape in thin silhouette against the pavement—merely a gray layer of finest dust shaped like a man, a tracery of impalpable powder on the stones.

"Upward and around me I passed the burning candle; vast figures in blue and red and gold grew out of the darkness; the painted walls sparkled; the shadows that had slept through all those centuries trembled and shrank away into distant corners.

"And then—and then I saw the gold edges of her sandals sparkle in the darkness, and the clasped girdle of virgin gold around her slender waist glimmered like purest flame!"

Burke, leaning far across the table, interlocked hands tightening, stared and stared into space. A smile edged his mouth; his voice grew wonderfully gentle:

"Why, she was scarcely eighteen—this child—lying there so motionless, so lifelike, with the sandals edging her little upturned feet, and the small

"'As though . . . scarcely sound asleep as yet.'"

hands of her folded between the breasts. It was as though she had just stretched herself out there —scarcely sound asleep as yet, and her thick, silky hair—cut as they cut children's hair in these days, you know—cradled her head and cheeks.

"So marvelous the mimicry of life, so absolute the deception of breathing sleep, that I scarce dared move, fearing to awaken her.

"When I did move I forgot the dusty shape of the dead at my feet, and left, full across his neck, the imprint of a spurred riding boot. It gave me my first shudder; I turned, feeling beneath my foot the soft, yielding powder, and stood aghast. Then—it is absurd!—but I felt as a man feels who has trodden inadvertently upon another's foot—and in an impulse of reparation I stooped hastily and attempted to smooth out the mortal dust which bore the imprint of my heel. But the fine powder flaked my glove, and, looking about for something to compose the ashes with, I picked up a papyrus scroll. Perhaps he himself had written on it; nobody can ever know, and I used it as a sort of hoe to scrape him together and smooth him out on the stones."

The young man drew a yellowish roll of paper-like substance from his pocket and laid it on the table.

"This is the same papyrus," he said. "I had forgotten that I carried it away with me until I found it in my shooting coat while packing to sail for New York."

The Tracer of Lost Persons reached over and picked up the scroll. It was flexible still, but brittle; he opened it with great care, considered the strange figures upon it for a while, then turned almost sharply on his visitor.

"Go on," he said.

And Burke went on:

"The candle was burning low; I lighted two more, placing them at her head and feet on the edges of the stone couch. Then, lighting a third candle, I stood beside the couch and looked down at the dead girl under her veil-like robe, set with golden stars."

He passed his hand wearily over his hair and forehead.

"I do not know what the accepted meaning of beauty may be if it was not there under my eyes. Flawless as palest amber ivory and rose, the smooth-flowing contours melted into exquisite symmetry; lashes like darkest velvet rested on the pure curve of the cheeks; the closed lids, the mouth still faintly stained with color, the delicate nose, the full, childish lips, sensitive, sweet, rest-

ing softly upon each other—if these were not all parts of but one lovely miracle, then there is no beauty save in a dream of Paradise. . . .

"A gold band of linked scarabs bound her short, thick hair straight across the forehead; thin scales of gold fell from a necklace, clothing her breasts in brilliant discolored metal, through which ivory-tinted skin showed. A belt of pure, soft gold clasped her body at the waist; gold-edged sandals clung to her little feet.

"At first, when the stunned surprise had subsided, I thought that I was looking upon some miracle of ancient embalming, hitherto unknown. Yet, in the smooth skin there was no slit to prove it, no opening in any vein or artery, no mutilation of this sculptured masterpiece of the Most High, no cerements, no bandages, no gilded carven case with painted face to stare open eyed through the waiting cycles.

"This was the image of sleep—of life unconscious—not of death. Yet is was death—death that had come upon her centuries and centuries ago; for the gold had turned iridescent and magnificently discolored; the sandal straps fell into dust as I bent above them, leaving the sandals clinging to her feet only by the wired silver core of the thongs. And, as I touched it fearfully, the

veil-like garment covering her, vanished into thin air, its metal stars twinkling in a shower around her on the stone floor."

The Tracer, motionless, intent, scarcely breathed; the younger man moved restlessly in his chair, the dazed light in his eyes clearing to sullen consciousness.

"What more is there to tell?" he said. "And to what purpose? All this is time wasted. I have my work cut out for me. What more is there to tell?"

"What you have left untold," said the Tracer, with the slightest ring of authority in his quiet voice.

And, as though he had added "Obey!" the younger man sank back in his chair, his hands contracting nervously.

"I went back to El Teb," he said; "I walked like a dreaming man. My sleep was haunted by her beauty; night after night, when at last I fell asleep, instantly I saw her face, and her dark eyes opening into mine in childish bewilderment; day after day I rode out to the fallen pillar and descended to that dark chamber where she lay alone. Then there came a time when I could not endure the thought of her lying there alone. I had never dared to touch her. Horror of what might hap-

pen had held me aloof lest she crumble at my touch to that awful powder which I had trodden on.

"I did not know what to do; my Arabs had begun to whisper among themselves, suspicious of my absences, impatient to break camp, perhaps, and roam on once more. Perhaps they believed I had discovered treasure somewhere; I am not sure. At any rate, dread of their following me, determination to take my dead away with me, drove me into action; and that day when I reached her silent chamber I lighted my candle, and, leaning above her for one last look, I touched her shoulder with my finger tip.

"It was a strange sensation. Prepared for a dreadful dissolution, utterly unprepared for cool, yielding flesh, I almost dropped where I stood. For her body was neither cold nor warm, neither dust-dry nor moist; neither the skin of the living nor the dead. It was firm, almost stiff, yet not absolutely without a certain hint of flexibility.

"The appalling wonder of it consumed me; fear, incredulity, terror, apathy succeeded each other; then slowly a fierce shrinking happiness swept me in every fiber.

"This marvelous death, this triumph of beauty over death, was mine. Never again should she lie here alone through the solitudes of night and day;

never again should the dignity of Death lack the tribute demanded of Life. Here was the appointed watcher—I, who had found her alone in the wastes of the world—all alone on the outermost edges of the world—a child, dead and unguarded. And standing there beside her I knew that I should never love again."

He straightened up, stretching out his arm: "I did not intend to carry her away to what is known as Christian burial. How could I consign her to darkness again, with all its dreadful mockery of marble, all its awful emblems?

"This lovely stranger was to be my guest forever. The living should be near her while she slept so sweetly her slumber through the centuries; she should have warmth, and soft hangings and sunlight and flowers; and her unconscious ears should be filled with the pleasant stir of living things. . . . I have a house in the country, a very old house among meadows and young woodlands. And I—I had dreamed of giving this child a home——"

His voice broke; he buried his head in his hands a moment; but when he lifted it again his features were hard as steel.

"There was already talk in the bazaar about me. I was probably followed, but I did not know

it. Then one of my men disappeared. For a week I hesitated to trust my Arabs; but there was no other way. I told them there was a mummy which I desired to carry to some port and smuggle out of the country without consulting the Government. I knew perfectly well that the Government would never forego its claim to such a relic of Egyptian antiquity. I offered my men too much, perhaps. I don't know. They hesitated for a week, trying by every artifice to see the treasure, but I never let them out of my sight.

"Then one day two white men came into camp; and with them came a government escort to arrest me for looting an Egyptian tomb. The white men were Joram Smiles and that Eurasian, Emanuel Gandon, who was partly white, I suppose. I didn't comprehend what they were up to at first. They escorted me forty miles to confront the official at Shen-Bak. When, after a stormy week, I was permitted to return to Saïs, my Arabs and the white men were gone. And the stone chamber under the water garden wall was empty as the hand I hold out to you!"

He opened his palm and rose, his narrowing eyes clear and dangerous.

"At the bazaar I learned enough to know what had been done. I traced the white men to the

coast. They sailed on the *Scythian Queen*, taking with them all that I care for on earth or in heaven! And you ask me why I measure their distance from me by a bullet's flight!"

The Tracer also rose, pale and grave.

"Wait!" he said. "There are other things to be done before you prepare to face a jury for double murder."

"It is for them to choose," said Burke. "They shall have the choice of returning to me my dead, or of going to hell full of lead."

"*Ex*actly, my dear sir. That part is not difficult," said the Tracer quietly. "There will be no occasion for violence, I assure you. Kindly leave such details to me. I know what is to be done. You are outwardly very calm, Mr. Burke —even dangerously placid; but though you maintain an admirable command over yourself superficially, you are laboring under terrible excitement. Therefore it is my duty to say to you at once that there is no cause for your excitement, no cause for your apprehension as to results. I feel exceedingly confident that you will, in due time, regain possession of all that you care for most—quietly, quietly, my dear sir! You are not yet ready to meet these men, nor am I ready to go with you. I beg you to continue your habit of

self-command for a little while. There is no haste —that is to say, there is every reason to make haste slowly. And the quickest method is to seat yourself. Thank you. And I shall sit here beside you and spread out this papyrus scroll for your inspection."

Burke stared at the Tracer, then at the scroll.

"What has that inscription to do with the matter in hand?" he demanded impatiently.

"I leave you to judge," said the Tracer. A dull tint of excitement flushed his lean cheeks; he twisted his gray mustache and bent over the unrolled scroll which was now held flat by weights at the four corners.

"Can you understand any of these symbols, Mr. Burke?" he asked.

"No."

"Curious," mused the Tracer. "Do you know it was fortunate that you put this bit of papyrus in the pocket of your shooting coat—so fortunate that, in a way, it approaches the miraculous?"

"What do you mean? Is there anything in that scroll bearing on this matter?"

"Yes."

"And you can read it? Are you versed in such learning, Mr. Keen?"

"I am an Egyptologist—among other details," said the Tracer calmly.

The young man gazed at him, astonished. The Tracer of Lost Persons picked up a pencil, laid a sheet of paper on the table beside the papyrus, and slowly began to copy the first symbol:

CHAPTER XIX

"THE ancient Egyptian word for the personal pronoun 'I' was *ȧnuk*," said the Tracer placidly. "The phonetic for *ȧ* was the hieroglyph

a reed; for *n* the water symbol

for *u* the symbols

for *k*

Therefore this hieroglyphic inscription begins with the personal pronoun

or *I*. That is very easy, of course.

"Now, the most ancient of Egyptian inscriptions read vertically in columns; there are only two columns in this papyrus, so we'll try it vertically and pass downward to the next symbol, which is inclosed in a sort of frame or cartouch. That

immediately signifies that royalty is mentioned; therefore, we have already translated as much as 'I, the king (or queen).' Do you see?"

"Yes," said Burke, staring.

"Very well. Now this symbol, number two,

spells out the word '*Meris*,' in this way: M (pronounced *me*) is phonetically symbolized by the characters

r by

(a mouth) and the comma

and the hieroglyph

i by two reeds

and two oblique strokes,

and *s* by

This gives us Meris, the name of that deposed and fugitive king of Egypt who, after a last raid on the summer palace of Mer-Shen, usurping ruler of Egypt, was followed and tracked to Saïs, where, with an arrow through his back, he crawled to El Teb and finally died there of his wound. All this Egyptologists are perfectly familiar with in the translations of the boastful tablets and inscriptions erected near Saïs by Mer-Shen, the three hundred and twelfth sovereign after Queen Nitocris."

He looked up at Burke, smiling. "Therefore," he said, "this papyrus scroll was written by Meris, ex-king, a speculative thousands of years before Christ. And it begins: 'I, Meris the King.'"

"How does all this bear upon what concerns me?" demanded Burke.

"Wait!"

Something in the quiet significance of the Tracer's brief command sent a curious thrill through the younger man. He leaned stiffly forward, studying the scroll, every faculty concentrated on the symbol which the Tracer had now touched with the carefully sharpened point of his pencil:

"That," said Mr. Keen, "is the ancient Egyp-

tian word for 'little,' '*Ket*.' The next, below, written in two lines, is 'Samaris,' a proper name —the name of a woman. Under that, again, is the symbol for the number 18; the decimal sign,

and eight vertical strokes,

Under that, again, is a hieroglyph of another sort, an ideograph representing a girl with a harp; and, beneath that, the symbol which always represented a dancing girl

and also the royal symbol inclosed in a cartouch,

which means literally 'the Ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt.' Under that is the significant symbol

representing an arm and a hand holding a stick. This always means *force*—to take forcibly or to use violence. Therefore, so far, we have the following literal translation: 'I, Meris the King, little Samaris, eighteen, a harpist, dancing girl, the Ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt, to take by violence——'"

"What does that make?" broke in Burke impatiently.

"*Wait!* Wait until we have translated everything literally. And, Mr. Burke, it might make it easier for us both if you would remember that I have had the pleasure of deciphering many hundreds of papyri before you had ever heard that there were such things."

"I beg your pardon," said the young man in a low voice.

"I beg yours for my impatience," said the Tracer pleasantly. "This deciphering always did affect my nerves and shorten my temper. And, no doubt, it is quite as hard on you. Shall we go on, Mr. Burke?"

"If you please, Mr. Keen."

So the Tracer laid his pencil point on the next symbol

"That is the symbol for night," he said; "and that

is the water symbol again, as you know; and that

is the ideograph, meaning a ship. The five reversed crescents

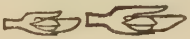
record the number of days voyage; the sign

means a house, and is also the letter H in the Egyptian alphabet.

"Under it, again, we have a repetition of the first symbol meaning *I*, and a repetition of the second symbol, meaning 'Meris, the King.' Then, below that cartouch, comes a new symbol,

which is the feminine personal pronoun, *sentus*, meaning '*she*'; and the first column is completed with the symbol for the ancient Egyptian verb, *nehes*, 'to awake,'

"And now we take the second column, which begins with the jackal ideograph expressing slyness or cleverness. Under it is the hieroglyph meaning 'to run away,' 'to escape.' And under that, Mr. Burke, is one of the rarest of all Egyptian symbols; a symbol seldom seen on stone or papyrus,



except in rare references to the mysteries of Isis. The meaning of it, so long in dispute, has finally been practically determined through a new discovery in the cuneiform inscriptions. It is the symbol of two hands holding two *closed* eyes; and it signifies power."

"You mean that those ancients understood hypnotism?" asked Burke, astonished.

"Evidently their priests did; evidently hypnotism was understood and employed in certain mysteries. And there is the symbol of it; and under it the hieroglyphs

meaning 'a day and a night,' with the symbol

as usual present to signify force or strength employed. Under that, again, is a human figure stretched upon a typical Egyptian couch. And now, Mr. Burke, *note carefully* three modifying signs: first, that it is a *couch* or *bed* on which the figure is stretched, not the funeral couch, not the embalming slab; second, there is no mummy mask covering the face, and no mummy case covering the body; third, that under the recumbent figure is pictured an *open* mouth, not a *closed* one.

"All these modify the ideograph, apparently representing death. But the sleep symbol is not present. Therefore it is a sound inference that all this simply confirms the symbol of hypnotism."

Burke, intensely absorbed, stared steadily at the scroll.

"Now," continued Mr. Keen, "we note the symbol of force again, always present; and, continuing horizontally, a cartouch quite empty except for the midday sun. That is simply translated; the midday sun illuminates nothing. Meris, deposed, is king only in name; and the sun no longer shines on him as 'Ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt.' Under that despairing symbol, 'King of Nothing,' we have

the phonetics which spell *sha*, the word for garden. And, just beyond this, horizontally, the modifying ideograph meaning 'a *water* garden';

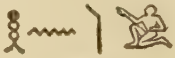
a design of lotus and tree alternating on a terrace. Under that is the symbol for the word '*aneb*,'

a 'wall.' Beyond that, horizontally, is the symbol for 'house.' It should be placed under the wall symbol, but the Egyptians were very apt to fill up spaces instead of continuing their vertical columns. Now, beneath, we find the imperative command

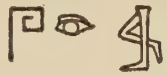
'arise!' And the Egyptian personal pronoun '*entuten*,'

which means 'you' or 'thou.'

"Under that is the symbol



which means 'priest,' or, literally, 'priest man.' Then comes the imperative 'awake to life!'



After that, our first symbol again, meaning '*I*,' followed horizontally by the symbol

signifying 'to go.'

"Then comes a very important drawing—you see?—the picture of a man with a jackal's head, not a dog's head. It is not accompanied by the phonetic in a cartouch, as it should be. Probably the writer was in desperate haste at the end. But, nevertheless, it is easy to translate that symbol of the man with a jackal's head. It is a picture of the Egyptian god, Anubis, who was supposed to linger at the side of the dying to conduct their souls. Anubis, the jackal-headed, is the courier, the personal escort of departing souls. And this is he.

"And now the screed ends with the cry 'Pray for me!'

the last symbol on this strange scroll—this missive written by a deposed, wounded, and dying king to an unnamed priest. Here is the literal translation in columns:

I	cunning
Meris the King	escape
little	hypnotize
Samaris	King of Nothing }
eighteen	place forcibly }
a harpist	garden }
a dancing girl—Ruler of	water garden }
Upper and Lower	wall
Egypt	house
took forcibly—night	Arise. Do
by water	Thou
five days	Priest Man
ship	Awake }
house	To life }
I	I go
Meris the King	Anubis
she	Pray
awake	

"And this is what that letter, thousands of years old, means in this language of ours, hundreds of years young: 'I, Meris the King, seized little Samaris, a harpist and a dancing girl, eighteen years of age, belonging to the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, and carried her away at night on shipboard—a voyage of five days—to my

house. I, Meris the King, lest she lie awake watching cunningly for a chance to escape, hypnotized her (or had her hypnotized) so that she lay like one dead or asleep, but breathing, and I, King no longer of Upper and Lower Egypt, took her and placed her in my house under the wall of the water garden. Arise! therefore, O thou priest; (go) and awaken her to life. I am dying (I go with Anubis!). Pray for me!'"

CHAPTER XX

For a full minute the two men sat there without moving or speaking. Then the Tracer laid aside his pencil.

"To sum up," he said, opening the palm of his left hand and placing the forefinger of his right across it, "the excavation made by the falling pillar raised in triumph above the water garden of the deposed king, Meris, by his rival, was the subterranean house of Meris. The prostrate figure which crumbled to powder at your touch may have been the very priest to whom this letter or papyrus was written. Perhaps the bearer of the scroll was a traitor and stabbed the priest as he was reading the missive. Who can tell how that priest died? He either died or betrayed his trust, for he never aroused the little Samaris from her suspended animation. And the water garden fell into ruins and she slept; and the Ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt raised his columns, lotus crowned, above the ruins; and she slept on. Then—*you* came."

Burke stared like one stupefied.

"I do not know," said the Tracer gravely, "what balm there may be in a suspension of sensation, perhaps of vitality, to protect the human body from corruption after death. I do not know how soon suspended animation or the state of hypnotic coma, undisturbed, changes into death—whether it comes gradually, imperceptibly freeing the soul; whether the soul hides there, asleep, until suddenly the flame of vitality is extinguished. I do not know how long she lay there with life in her."

He leaned back and touched an electric bell, then, turning to Burke:

"Speaking of pistol range," he said, "unstrap those weapons and pass them over, if you please."

And the young man obeyed as in a trance.

"Thank you. There are four men coming into this room. You will keep your seat, if you please, Mr. Burke."

After a moment the door opened noiselessly. Two men handcuffed together entered the room; two men, hands in their pockets, sauntered carelessly behind the prisoners and leaned back against the closed door.

"That short, red-haired, lame man with the cast in his eye—do you recognize him?" asked the Tracer quietly.

Burke, grasping the arms of his chair, had started to rise, fury fairly blazing from his eyes; but, at the sound of the Tracer's calm, even voice, he sank back into his chair.

"That is Joram Smiles? You recognize him?" continued Mr. Keen.

Burke nodded.

"*Ex*actly—alias Limpy, alias Red Jo, alias Big Stick Joram, alias Pinky; swindler, international confidence man, fence, burglar, gambler; convicted in 1887, and sent to Sing Sing for forgery; convicted in 1898, and sent to Auburn for swindling; arrested by my men on board the S.S. *Scythian Queen*, at the cabled request of John T. Burke, Esquire, and held to explain the nature of his luggage, which consisted of the contents of an Egyptian vault or underground ruin, declared at the customhouse as a mummy, and passed as such."

The quiet, monotonous voice of the Tracer halted, then, as he glanced at the second prisoner, grew harder:

"Emanuel Gandon, general international criminal, with over half a hundred aliases, arrested in company with Smiles and held until Mr. Burke's arrival."

Turning to Burke, the Tracer continued: "Fortunately, the *Scythian Queen* broke down off Brin-

disi. It gave us time to act on your cable; we found these men aboard when she was signaled off the Hook. I went out with the pilot myself, Mr. Burke."

Smiles shot a wicked look at Burke; Gandon scowled at the floor.

"Now," said the Tracer pleasantly, meeting the venomous glare of Smiles, "I'll get you that warrant you have been demanding to have exhibited to you. Here it is—charging you and your amiable friend Gandon with breaking into and robbing the Metropolitan Museum of ancient Egyptian gold ornaments, in March, 1903, and taking them to France, where they were sold to collectors. It seems that you found the business good enough to go prowling about Egypt on a hunt for something to sell here. A great mistake, my friends—a very great mistake, because, after the Museum has finished with you, the Egyptian Government desires to extradite you. And I rather suspect you'll have to go."

He nodded to the two quiet men leaning against the door.

"Come, Joram," said one of them pleasantly.

But Smiles turned furiously on the Tracer. "You lie, you old gray rat!" he cried. "That ain't no mummy; that's a plain dead girl! And

there ain't no extrydition for body snatchin', so I guess them niggers at Cairo won't get us, after all!"

"Perhaps," said the Tracer, looking at Burke, who had risen, pale and astounded. "Sit down, Mr. Burke! There is no need to question these men; no need to demand what they robbed you of. For," he added slowly, "what they took from the garden grotto of Saïs, and from you, I have under my own protection."

The Tracer rose, locked the door through which the prisoners and their escorts had departed; then, turning gravely on Burke, he continued:

"That panel, there, is a door. There is a room beyond—a room facing to the south, bright with sunshine, flowers, soft rugs, and draperies of the East. *She* is there—like a child asleep!"

Burke reeled, steadying himself against the wall; the Tracer stared at space, speaking very slowly:

"Such death I have never before heard of. From the moment she came under my protection I have dared to doubt—many things. And an hour ago you brought me a papyrus scroll confirming my doubts. I doubt still—Heaven knows what! Who can say how long the flame of life may flicker within suspended animation? A week?

A month? A year? Longer than that? Yes; the Hindoos have proved it. How long? The span of a normal life? Or longer? Can the life flame burn indefinitely when the functions are absolutely suspended—generation after generation, century after century——?"

Burke, ghastly white, straightened up, quivering in every limb; the Tracer, as pale as he, laid his hand on the secret panel.

"If—if you dare say it—the phrase is this: '*O Ket Samaris, Nehes!*'—'O Little Samaris, awake!'"

"I—dare. In Heaven's name, open that door!"

Then, averting his head, the Tracer of Lost Persons swung open the panel.

A flood of sunshine flashed on Burke's face; he entered; and the paneled door closed behind him without a sound.

Minute after minute passed; the Tracer stood as though turned to stone, gray head bent.

Then he heard Burke's voice ring out unsteadily:

"O Ket Samaris—Samaris! O Ket Samaris—*Nehes!*"

And again: "Samaris! Samaris! O beloved, awake!"

And once more: "*Nehes!* O Samaris!"

Silence, broken by a strange, sweet, drowsy plaint—like a child awakened at midnight by a dazzling light.

"Samaris!"

Then, through the stillness, a little laugh, and a softly tremulous voice:

"*Ari un āhā, O Entuk sen!*"

CHAPTER XXI

"WHAT we want to do," said Gatewood over the telephone, "is to give you a corking little dinner at the Santa Regina. There'll be Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Kerns, Captain and Mrs. Harren, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Burke, Mrs. Gatewood, and myself. We want you to set the date for it, Mr. Keen, and we also wish you to suggest one more deliriously happy couple whom you have dragged out of misery and flung head-first into terrestrial paradise."

"Do you young people really care to do this for me?" asked the Tracer, laughing.

"Of course we do. We're crazy about it. We want one more couple, and you to set the date."

There was the slightest pause; then the Tracer's voice, with the same undertone of amusement ringing through it:

"How would your cousin, Victor Carden, do?"

"He's all right, only he isn't married. We want two people whom you have joined together after hazard has put them asunder and done stunts with them."

"Very well; Victor Carden and his very lovely wife will be just the people."

"Is Victor married?" demanded Gatewood, astonished.

"No," said the Tracer demurely, "but he will be in time for that dinner." And he set the date for the end of the week in an amused voice, and rang off.

Then he glanced at the clock, touched an electric bell, and again unhooking the receiver of the telephone, called up the Sherwood Studios and asked for Mr. Carden.

"Is *this* Mr. Carden? Oh, good morning, Mr. Carden! This is Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons. Could you make it convenient to call—say in course of half an hour? Thank you. . . . What? . . . Well, speaking with that caution and reserve which we are obliged to employ in making any preliminary statements to our clients, I think I may safely say that you have every reason to feel moderately encouraged."

"You mean," said Carden's voice, "that you have actually solved the proposition?"

"It has been a difficult proposition, Mr. Carden; I will not deny that it has taxed our resources to the uttermost. Over a thousand people, first and last, have been employed on this case. It has been a slow and tedious affair, Mr. Carden—tedious for us all. We seldom have a case continue

as long as this has; it is a year ago to-day since you placed the matter in our hands. . . .What? Well, without committing myself, I think that I may venture to express a carefully qualified opinion that the solution of the case is probably practically in the way of being almost accomplished! . . . Yes, I shall expect you in half an hour. Good-by!"

The Tracer of Lost Persons' eyes were twinkling as he hung up the receiver and turned in his revolving chair to meet the pretty young woman who had entered in response to his ring.

"The Carden case, if you please, Miss Smith," he said, smiling to himself.

The young woman also smiled; the Carden case had become a classic in the office. Nobody except Mr. Keen had believed that the case could ever be solved.

"Safe-deposit box 108923!" said Miss Smith softly, pressing a speaking tube to her red lips. In a few moments there came a hissing thud from the pneumatic tube; Miss Smith unlocked it and extracted a smooth, steel cylinder.

"The combination for that cylinder is A-4-44-11-X," observed the Tracer, consulting a cipher code, "which, translated," he added, "gives us the setting combination, One, D, R-R,-J-'24."

Miss Smith turned the movable disks at the end of the cylinder until the required combination appeared. Then she unscrewed the cylinder head and dumped out the documents in the famous Carden case.

"As Mr. Carden will be here in half an hour or so I think we had better run over the case briefly," nodded the Tracer, leaning back in his chair and composing himself to listen. "Begin with my preliminary memorandum, Miss Smith."

"Case 108923," began the girl. Then she read the date, Carden's full name, Victor Carden, a terse biography of the same gentleman, and added: "Case accepted. Contingent fee, $5,000."

"Quite so," said Mr. Keen; "now, run through the minutes of the first interview."

And Miss Smith unrolled a typewritten scroll and read:

"Victor Carden, Esquire, the well-known artist, called this evening at 6.30. Tall, well-bred, good appearance, very handsome; very much embarrassed. Questioned by Mr. Keen he turned pink, and looked timidly at the stenographer (Miss Colt). Asked if he might not see Mr. Keen alone, Miss Colt retired. Mr. Keen set the recording phonograph in motion by dropping his elbow on his desk."

A brief *résumé* of the cylinder records followed:

"Mr. Carden asked Mr. Keen if he (Mr. Keen) knew who he (Mr. Carden) was. Mr. Keen replied that everybody knew Mr. Carden, the celebrated painter and illustrator who had created the popular type of beauty known as the 'Carden Girl.' Mr. Carden blushed and fidgeted. (*Notes from Mr. Keen's Observation Book, pp. 291–297.*) Admitted that he was the creator of the 'Carden Girl.' Admitted he had drawn and painted that particular type of feminine beauty many times. Fidgeted some more. (*Keen's O. B., pp. 298–299.*) Volunteered the statement that this type of beauty, known as the 'Carden Girl,' was the cause of great unhappiness to himself. Questioned, turned pinker and fidgeted. (*K. O. B., page 300.*) Denied that his present trouble was caused by the model who had posed for the 'Carden Girl.' Explained that a number of assorted models had posed for that type of beauty. Further explained that none of them resembled the type; that the type was his own creation; that he used models merely for the anatomy, and that he always idealized form and features.

"Questioned again, admitted that the features of the 'Carden Girl' were his ideal of the highest and loveliest type of feminine beauty. Did not

deny that he had fallen in love with his own creation. Turned red and tried to smoke. (*K. O. B., page 303.*) Admitted he had been fascinated himself with his own rendering of a type of beauty which he had never seen anywhere except as rendered by his own pencil on paper or on canvas. Fidgeted. (*K. O. B., page 304.*) Admitted that he could easily fall in love with a woman who resembled the 'Carden Girl.' Didn't believe she ever really existed. Confessed he had hoped for years to encounter her, but had begun to despair. Admitted that he had ventured to think that Mr. Keen might trace such a girl for him. Doubted Mr. Keen's success. Fidgeted (*K. O. B., page 306*), and asked Mr. Keen to take the case. Promised to send to Mr. Keen a painting in oil which embodied his loftiest ideal of the type known as the 'Carden Girl.' (*Portrait received; lithographs made and distributed to our agents according to routine, from Canada to Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Pacific.*)

"Mr. Keen terminated the interview with characteristic tact, accepting the case on the contingent fee of $5,000."

"Very well," said the Tracer, as Miss Smith rolled up the scroll and looked at him for further instructions. "Now, perhaps you had better run

over the short summary of proceedings to date. I mean the digest which you will find attached to the completed records."

Miss Smith found the paper, unrolled it, and read:

"During the twelve months' investigation and search (*in re Carden*) seven hundred and nine young women were discovered who resembled very closely the type sought for. By process of elimination, owing to defects in figure, features, speech, breeding, etc., etc., this list was cut down to three. One of these occasionally chewed gum, but otherwise resembled the type. The second married before the investigation of her habits could be completed. The third is apparently a flawless replica of Mr. Carden's original in face, figure, breeding, education, moral and mental habits. (*See Document 23, A.*)"

"Read Document 23, A," nodded Mr. Keen.

And Miss Smith read:

ROSALIND HOLLIS, M.D.

Age	24
Height	5 feet 9 inches
Weight	160 pounds
Hair	Thick, bright, ruddy golden, and inclined to curl.

Teeth	Perfect
Eyes	Dark violet-blue
Mouth	Perfect
Color	Fair. An ivory-tinted blonde.
Figure	Perfect
Health	Perfect
Temper	Feminine
Habits	Austere, with a resolutely suppressed capacity for romance.
Business	None
Profession	Physician
Mania	A Mission

"NOTE.—Dr. Rosalind Hollis was presented to society in her eighteenth year. At the end of her second season she withdrew from society with the detemination to devote her entire life to charity. Settlement work and the study of medicine have occupied her constantly. Recently admitted to practice, she spends her mornings in visiting the poor, whom she treats free of all charge; her afternoons and evenings are devoted to what she expects is to be her specialty: the study of the rare malady known as Lamour's Disease. (*See note on second page.*)

"It is understood that Dr. Hollis has abjured the society of all men other than her patients

and such of her professional *confrères* as she is obliged to consult or work with. Her theory is that of the beehive: drones for mates, workers for work. She adds, very decidedly, that she belongs to the latter division, and means to remain there permanently.

"NOTE (*Mr. Keen's O. B., pp. 916–18*).—Her eccentricity is probably the result of a fine, wholesome, highly strung young girl taking life and herself too seriously. The remedy will be the *Right Man.*"

"*Ex*actly," nodded Mr. Keen, joining the tips of his thin fingers and partly closing his eyes. "Now, Miss Smith, the disease which Dr. Hollis intends to make her specialty—have you any notes on that?"

"Here they are," said Miss Smith; and she read: "Lamour's Disease; the rarest of all known diseases; first discovered and described by Ero S. Lamour, M.D., M.S., F.B.A., M.F.H., in 1861. Only a single case has ever been observed. This case is fully described in Dr. Lamour's superb and monumental work in sixteen volumes. Briefly, the disease appears without any known cause, and is ultimately supposed to result fatally. The first symptom is the appearance of a faintly bluish circle under the eyes, as though the patient was

accustomed to using the eyes too steadily at times. Sometimes a slight degree of fever accompanies this manifestation; pulse and temperature vary. The patient is apparently in excellent health, but liable to loss of appetite, restlessness, and a sudden flushing of the face. These symptoms are followed by others unmistakable: the patient becomes silent at times; at times evinces a weakness for sentimental expressions; flushes easily; is easily depressed; will sit for hours looking at one person; and, if not checked, will exhibit impulsive symptoms of affection for the opposite sex. The strangest symptom of all, however, is the physical change in the patient, whose features and figure, under the trained eye of the observer, gradually from day to day assume the symmetry and charm of a beauty almost unearthly, sometimes accompanied by a spiritual pallor which is unmistakable in confirming the diagnosis, and which, Dr. Lamour believes, presages the inexorable approach of immortality.

"There is no known remedy for Lamour's Disease. The only case on record is the case of the young lady described by Dr. Lamour, who watched her for years with unexampled patience and enthusiasm; finally, in the interest of science, marrying his patient in order to devote his life

to a study of her symptoms. Unfortunately, some of these disappeared early—within a week—but the curious manifestation of physical beauty remained, and continued to increase daily to a dazzling radiance, with no apparent injury to the patient. Dr. Lamour, unfortunately, died before his investigations, covering over forty years, could be completed; his widow survived him for a day or two only, leaving sixteen children.

"Here is a wide and unknown field for medical men to investigate. It is safe to say that the physician who first discovers the bacillus of Lamour's Disease and the proper remedy to combat it will reap as his reward a glory and renown imperishable. Lamour's Disease is a disease not yet understood—a disease whose termination is believed to be fatal—a strange disease which seems to render radiant and beautiful the features of the patient, brightening them with the forewarning of impending death and the splendid resurrection of immortality."

The Tracer of Lost Persons caressed his chin reflectively. "*Ex*actly, Miss Smith. So this is the disease which Dr. Hollis has chosen for her specialty. And only one case on record. *Ex*actly. Thank you."

Miss Smith replaced the papers in the steel

cylinder, slipped it into the pneumatic tube, sent it whizzing below to the safe-deposit vaults, and, saluting Mr. Keen with a pleasant inclination of her head, went out of the room.

The Tracer turned in his chair, picked up the daily detective report, and scanned it until he came to the name Hollis. It appeared that the daily routine of Rosalind Hollis had not varied during the past three weeks. In the mornings she was good to the poor with bottles and pills; in the afternoons she tucked one of Lamour's famous sixteen volumes under her arm and walked to Central Park, where, with democratic simplicity, she sat on a secluded bench and pored over the symptoms of Lamour's Disease. About five she retired to her severely simple apartments in the big brownstone office building devoted to physicians, corner of Fifty-eighth Street and Madison Avenue. Here she took tea, read a little, dined all alone, and retired about nine. This was the guileless but determined existence of Rosalind Hollis, M.D., according to McConnell, the detective assigned to observe her.

The Tracer refolded the report of his chief of detectives and pigeonholed it just as the door opened and a tall, well-built, attractive young man entered.

Shyness was written all over him; he offered his hand to Mr. Keen with an embarrassed air and seated himself at that gentleman's invitation.

"I'm almost sorry I ever began this sort of thing," he blurted out, like a big schoolboy appalled at his own misdemeanors. "The truth is, Mr. Keen, that the prospect of actually seeing a 'Carden Girl' alive has scared me through and through. I've a notion that my business with that sort of a girl ends when I've drawn her picture."

"But surely," said the Tracer mildly, "you have some natural curiosity to see the living copy of your charming but inanimate originals, haven't you, Mr. Carden?"

"Yes—oh, certainly. I'd like to see one of them alive—say out of a window, or from a cab. I should not care to be too close to her."

"But merely seeing her does not commit you," interposed Mr. Keen, smiling. "She is far too busy, too much absorbed in her own affairs to take any notice of you. I understand that she has something of an aversion for men."

"Aversion!"

"Well, she excludes them as unnecessary to her existence."

"Why?" asked Carden.

"Because she has a mission in life," said Mr. Keen gravely.

Carden looked out of the window. It was pleasant weather—June in all its early loveliness—the fifth day of June. The sixth was his birthday.

"I've simply got to marry somebody before the day after to-morrow," he said aloud—"that is, if I want my legacy."

"What!" demanded the Tracer sharply.

Carden turned, pink and guilty. "I didn't tell you all the circumstances of my case," he said. "I suppose I ought to have done so."

"*Ex*actly," said the Tracer severely. "Why is it necessary that you marry somebody before the day after to-morrow?"

"Well, it's my twenty-fifth birthday——"

"Somebody has left you money on condition that you marry before your twenty-fifth birthday? Is that it, Mr. Carden? An uncle? An imbecile grandfather? A sentimental aunt?"

"My Aunt Tabby Van Beekman."

"Where is she?"

"In Trinity churchyard. It's too late to expostulate with her, you see. Besides, it wouldn't have done any good when she was alive."

The Tracer knitted his brows, musing, the points of his slim fingers joined.

"She was very proud, very autocratic," said Carden. "I am the last of my race and my aunt was determined that the race should not die out with me. I don't want to marry and increase, but she's trying to make me. At all events, I am not going to marry any woman inferior to the type I have created with my pencil—what the public calls the 'Carden Girl.' And now you see that your discovery of this living type comes rather late. In two days I must be legally married if I want my Aunt Tabby's legacy; and to-day for the first time I hear of a girl who, you assure me, compares favorably to my copyrighted type, but who has a mission and an aversion to men. So you see, Mr. Keen, that the matter is perfectly hopeless."

"I don't see anything of the kind," said Mr. Keen firmly.

"What? — do you believe there is any chance——"

"Of your falling in love within the next hour or so? Yes, I do. I think there is every chance of it. I am sure of it. But that is not the difficulty. The problem is far more complicated."

"You mean——"

"*Ex*actly; how to marry that girl before day after to-morrow. That's the problem, Mr. Carden!—not whether you are capable of falling in

love with her. I have seen her; I *know* you can't avoid falling in love with her. Nobody could. I myself am on the verge of it; and I am fifty: you can't avoid loving her."

"If that were so," said Carden gravely; "if I were really going to fall in love with her—I would not care a rap about my Aunt Tabby and her money——"

"You ought to care about it for this young girl's sake. That legacy is virtually hers, not yours. She has a right to it. No man can ever give enough to the woman he loves; no man has ever done so. What *she* gives and what *he* gives are never a fair exchange. If you can balance the account in any measure, it is your duty to do it. Mr. Carden, if she comes to love you she may think it very fine that you bring to her your love, yourself, your fame, your talents, your success, your position, your gratifying income. But I tell you it's not enough to balance the account. It is never enough—no, not all your devotion to her included! You can never balance the account on earth—all you can do is to try to balance it materially and spiritually. Therefore I say, endow her with *all* your earthly goods. Give all you can in every way to lighten as much as possible man's hopeless debt to all women who have ever loved."

"You talk about it as though I were already committed," said Carden, astonished.

"You are, morally. For a month I have, without her knowledge, it is true, invaded the privacy of a very lovely young girl—studied her minutely, possessed myself of her history, informed myself of her habits. What excuse had I for this unless I desired her happiness and yours? Nobody could offer me any inducement to engage in such a practice unless I believed that the means might justify a moral conclusion. And the moral conclusion of this investigation is your marriage to her."

"Certainly," said Carden uneasily, "but how are we going to accomplish it by to-morrow? How is it going to be accomplished at all?"

The Tracer of Lost Persons rose and began to pace the long rug, clasping his hands behind his back. Minute after minute sped; Carden stared alternately at Mr. Keen and at the blue sky through the open window.

"It is seldom," said Mr. Keen with evident annoyance, "that I personally take any spectacular part in the actual and concrete demonstrations necessary to a successful conclusion of a client's case. But I've got to do it this time."

He went to a cupboard, picked out a gray wig

and gray side whiskers and deliberately waved them at Carden.

"You see what these look like?" he demanded.

"Y-yes."

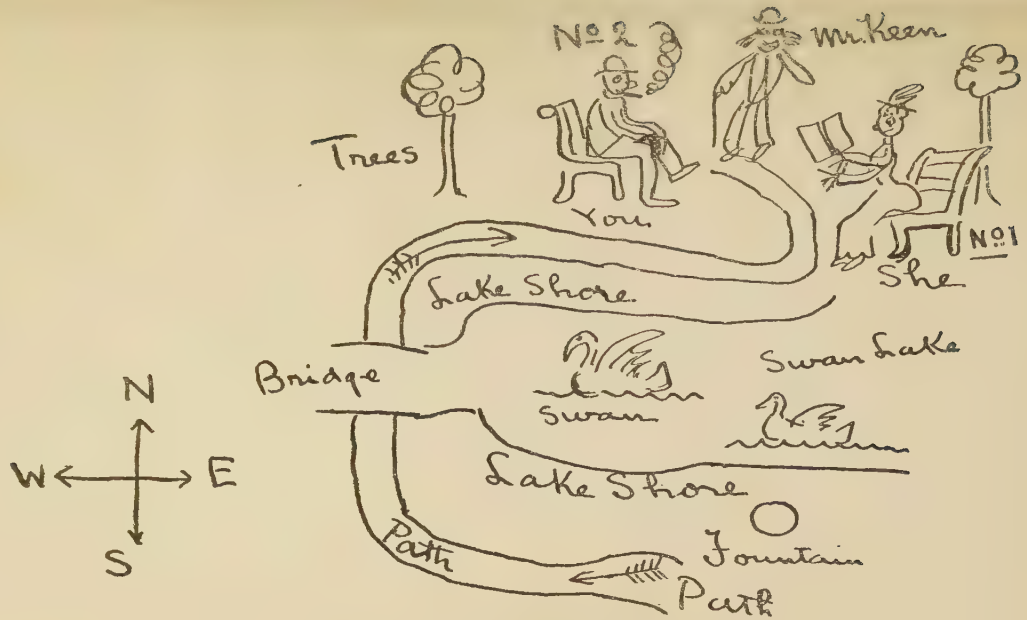
"Very well. It is now noon. Do you know the Park? Do you happen to recollect a shady turn in the path after you cross the bridge over the swan lake? Here; I'll draw it for you. Now, here is the lake; here's the esplanade and fountain, you see. Here's the path. You follow it — so! — around the lake, across the bridge, then following the lake to the right—so!—then up the wooded slope to the left—so! Now, here is a bench. I mark it Number One. *She* sits there with her book —there she is!"

"If she looks like *that*—" began Carden. And they both laughed with the slightest trace of excitement.

"Here is Bench Number Two!" resumed the Tracer. "Here you sit—and there you are!"

"Thanks," said Carden, laughing again.

"Now," continued the Tracer, "you must be there at one o'clock. She will be there at one-thirty, or earlier perhaps. A little later I will become benignly visible. Your part is merely a thinking part; you are to do nothing, say nothing, unless spoken to. And when you are spoken to



MR. KEEN'S SKETCH OF THE RENDEZVOUS

you are to acquiesce in whatever anybody says to you, and you are to do whatever anybody requests you to do. And, above all, don't be surprised at *anything* that may happen. You'll be nervous enough; I expect that. You'll probably color up and flush and fidget; I expect that; I count on that. But don't lose your nerve entirely; and don't think of attempting to escape."

"Escape! From what? From whom?"

"From her."

"*Her?*"

"Are you going to follow my instructions?" demanded the Tracer of Lost Persons.

"I—y-yes, of course."

"Very well, then. I am going to rub some of this under your eyes." And Mr. Keen produced a make-up box and, walking over to Carden, calmly darkened the skin under his eyes.

"I look as though I had been on a bat!" exclaimed Carden, surveying himself in a mirror. "Do you think any girl could find any attraction in such a countenance?"

"*She* will," observed the Tracer meaningly. "Now, Mr. Carden, one last word: The moment you find yourself in love with her, and the first moment you have the chance to do so decently, make love to her. She won't dismiss you; she will

repulse you, of course, but she won't let you go. I know what I am saying; all I ask of you is to promise on your honor to carry out these instructions. Do you promise?"

"I do."

"Then here is the map of the rendezvous which I have drawn. Be there promptly. Good morning."

CHAPTER XXII

At one o'clock that afternoon a young man earnestly consulting a map might have been seen pursuing his solitary way through Central Park. Fresh green foliage arched above him, flecking the path with fretted shadow and sunlight; the sweet odor of flowering shrubs saturated the air; the waters of the lake sparkled where swans swept to and fro, snowy wings spread like sails to the fitful June wind.

"This," he murmured, pausing at a shaded bend in the path, "must be Bench Number One. I am not to sit on that. This must be Bench Number Two. I *am* to sit on that. So here I am," he added nervously, seating himself and looking about him with the caution of a cat in a strange back yard.

There was nobody in sight. Reassured, he ventured to drop one knee over the other and lean upon his walking stick. For a few minutes he remained in this noncommittal attitude, alert at every sound, anxious, uncomfortable, dreading he knew not what. A big, fat, gray squirrel racing noisily across the

fallen leaves gave him a shock. A number of birds came to look at him—or so it appeared to him, for in the inquisitive scrutiny of a robin he fancied he divined sardonic meaning, and in the blank yellow stare of a purple grackle, a sinister significance out of all proportion to the size of the bird.

"What an absurd position to be in!" he thought. And suddenly he was seized with a desire to flee.

He didn't because he had promised not to, but the desire persisted to the point of mania. Oh, how he could run if he only hadn't promised not to! His entire being tingled with the latent possibilities of a burst of terrific speed. He wanted to scuttle away like a scared rabbit. The pace of the kangaroo would be slow in comparison. What a record he could make if he hadn't promised not to.

He crossed his knees the other way and brooded. The gray squirrel climbed the bench and nosed his pockets for possible peanuts, then hopped off hopefully toward a distant nursemaid and two children.

Growing more alarmed every time he consulted his watch Carden attempted to stem his rising panic with logic and philosophy, repeating: "Steady! my son! Don't act like this! You're not obliged to marry her if you don't fall in love with her; and if you do, you won't mind marrying her.

That is philosophy. That is logic. Oh, I wonder what will have happened to me by this time to-morrow! I wish it *were* this time to-morrow! I wish it were this time next month! Then it would be all over. Then it would be——"

His muttering speech froze on his lips. Rooted to his bench he sat staring at a distant figure approaching—the figure of a young girl in a summer gown.

Nearer, nearer she came, walking with a free-limbed, graceful step, head high, one arm clasping a book.

That was the way the girls he drew would have walked had they ever lived. Even in the midst of his fright his artist's eyes noted that: noted the perfect figure, too, and the witchery of its grace and contour, and the fascinating poise of her head, and the splendid color of her hair; noted mechanically the flowing lines of her gown, and the dainty modeling of arm and wrist and throat and ear.

Then, as she reached her bench and seated herself, she raised her eyes and looked at him. And for the first time in his life he realized that ideal beauty was but the pale phantom of the real and founded on something more than imagination and thought; on something of vaster import than fancy and taste and technical skill; that it was founded

on Life itself—on breathing, living, palpitating, tremulous Life!—from which all true inspiration must come.

Over and over to himself he was repeating: "Of course, it is perfectly impossible that I can be in love already. Love doesn't happen between two ticks of a watch. I am merely amazed at that girl's beauty; that is all. I am merely astounded in the presence of perfection; that is all. There is nothing more serious the matter with me. It isn't necessary for me to continue to look at her; it isn't vital to my happiness if I never saw her again. . . . That is—of course, I should like to see her, because I never did see living beauty such as hers in any woman. Not even in my pictures. What superb eyes! What a fascinately delicate nose! *What* a nose! By Heaven, that nose *is* a nose! I'll draw noses *that* way in future. My pictures are all out of drawing; I must fit arms into their sockets the way hers fit! I must remember the modeling of her eyelids, too—and that chin! and those enchanting hands——"

She looked up leisurely from her book, surveyed him calmly, absent-eyed, then bent her head again to the reading.

"There *is* something the matter with me," he thought with a suppressed gulp. "I—if she looks

at me again—with those iris-hued eyes of a young goddess—I—I think I'm done for. I believe I'm done for anyway. It seems rather mad to think it. But there *is* something the matter——"

She deliberately looked at him again.

"It's all wrong for them to let loose a girl like that on people," he thought to himself, "all wrong. Everybody is bound to go mad over her. I'm going now. I'm mad already. I know I am, which proves I'm no lunatic. It isn't her beauty; it's the way she wears it—every motion, every breath of her. I know exactly what her voice is like. Anybody who looks into her eyes can see what her soul is like. She isn't out of drawing anywhere—physically or spiritually. And when a man sees a girl like that, why—why there's only one thing that can happen to him as far as I can see. And it doesn't take a year either. Heavens! How awfully remote from me she seems to be."

She looked up again, calmly, but not at him. A kindly, gray-whiskered old gentleman came tottering and rocking into view, his rosy, wrinkled face beaming benediction on the world as he passed through it—on the sunshine dappling the undergrowth, on the furry squirrels sitting up on their hind legs to watch him pass, on the stray dicky-bird that hopped fearlessly in his path, at the

young man sitting very rigid there on his bench, at the fair, sweet-faced girl who met his aged eyes with the gentlest of involuntary smiles. And Carden did not recognize him!

Who could help smiling confidently into that benign face, with its gray hair and gray whiskers? Goodness radiated from every wrinkle.

"Dr. Atwood!" exclaimed the girl softly as she rose to meet this marvelous imitation of Dr. Austin Atwood, the great specialist on children's diseases.

The old man beamed weakly at her, halted, still beaming, fumbled for his eyeglasses, adjusted them, and peered closely into her face.

"Bless my soul," he smiled, "our pretty Dr. Hollis!"

"I—I did not suppose you would remember me," she said, rosy with pleasure.

"Remember you? Surely, surely." He made her a quaint, old-fashioned bow, turned, and peeped across the walk at Carden. And Carden, looking straight into his face, did not know the old man, who turned to Dr. Hollis again with many mysterious nods of his doddering head.

"You're watching him, too, are you?" he chuckled, leaning toward her.

"Watching whom, Dr. Atwood?" she asked surprised.

"Hush, child! I thought you had noticed that unfortunate and afflicted young man opposite."

Dr. Hollis looked curiously at Carden, then at the old gentleman with gray whiskers.

"Please sit down, Dr. Atwood, and tell me," she murmured. "I have noticed nothing in particular about the young man on the bench there." And she moved to give him room; and the young man opposite stared at them both as though bereft of reason.

"A heavy book for small hands, my child," said the old gentleman in his quaintly garrulous fashion, peering with dimmed eyes at the volume in her lap.

She smiled, looking around at him.

"My, my!" he said, tremblingly raising his eyeglasses to scan the title on the page; "Dr. Lamour's famous works! Are *you* studying Lamour, child?"

"Yes," she said with that charming inflection youth reserves for age.

"Astonishing!" he murmured. "The coincidence is more than remarkable. A physician! And studying Lamour's Disease! Incredible!"

"Is there anything strange in that, Dr. Atwood?" she smiled.

"Strange!" He lowered his voice, peering

across at Carden. "Strange, did you say? Look across the path at that poor young man sitting there!"

"Yes," she said, perplexed, "I see him."

"*What* do you see?" whispered the old gentleman in a shakily portentous voice. "Here you sit reading about what others have seen; now what do *you* see?"

"Why, only a man—rather young——"

"No *symptoms*?"

"Symptoms? Of what?"

The old gentleman folded his withered hands over his cane. "My child," he said, "for a year I have had that unfortunate young man under secret observation. He was not aware of it; it never entered his mind that I could be observing *him* with minutest attention. He may have supposed there was nothing the matter with him. He was in error. I have studied him carefully. Look closer! *Are* there dark circles under his eyes—or are there not?" he ended in senile triumph.

"There are," she began, puzzled, "but I—but of what interest to me——"

"Compare his symptoms with the symptoms in that book you are studying," said the old gentleman hoarsely.

"Do you mean—do you suppose—" she stam-

mered, turning her eyes on Carden, who promptly blushed to his ears and began to fidget.

"*Every symptom*," muttered the old gentleman. "Poor, poor young man!"

She had seen Carden turn a vivid pink; she now saw him fidget with his walking stick; she discovered the blue circles under his eyes. Three symptoms at once!

"Do you believe it *possible*?" she whispered excitedly under her breath to the old gentleman beside her. "It seems incredible! Such a rare disease! Only one single case ever described and studied! It seems impossible that I could be so fortunate as actually to see a case! Tell me, Dr. Atwood, do you believe that young man is really afflicted with Lamour's Disease?"

"There is but one way to be absolutely certain," said the old gentleman in a solemn voice, "and that is to study him; corroborate your suspicions by observing his pulse and temperature, as did Dr. Lamour."

"But—how can I?" she faltered. "I—he would probably object to becoming a patient of mine——"

"Ask him, child! Ask him."

"I have not courage——"

"Courage should be the badge of your profes-

sion," said the old gentleman gravely. "When did a good physician ever show the white feather in the cause of humanity?"

"I—I know, but this requires a different sort of courage."

"How," persisted the old gentleman, "can you confirm your very natural suspicions concerning this unfortunate young man unless you corroborate your observations by studying him at close range? Besides, already it seems to me that certain unmistakable signs are visible; I mean that strange physical phase which Dr. Lamour dwells on: the symmetry of feature and limb, the curiously spiritual beauty. Do you not notice these? Or is my sight so dim that I only imagine it?"

"He is certainly symmetrical—and—in a certain way—almost handsome in regard to features," she admitted, looking at Carden.

"Poor, poor boy!" muttered the old gentleman, wagging his gray whiskers. "I am too old to help him—too old to dream of finding a remedy for the awful malady which I am now convinced has seized him. I shall study him no more. It is useless. All I can do now is to mention his case to some young, vigorous, ambitious physician — some specialist——"

"Don't!" she whispered almost fiercely, "don't

do that, Dr. Atwood! I want him, please! I —you helped me to discover him, you see. And his malady is to be my specialty. Please, do you mind if I keep him all to myself and study him?"

"But you refused, child."

"I didn't mean to. I—I didn't exactly see how I was to study him. But I must study him! Oh, I *must*! There will surely be some way. Please let me. You discovered him, I admit, but I will promise you faithfully to devote my entire life to studying him, as the great Lamour devoted his life for forty years to his single patient."

"But Dr. Lamour married his patient," said the Tracer mildly.

"He—I—that need not be necessary——"

"But if it should prove necessary?"

"I—you——"

"Answer me, child."

She stared across at Carden, biting her red lips. He turned pink promptly and fidgeted.

"He *has* got it!" she whispered excitedly. "Oh, *do* you mind if I take him for mine? I am perfectly wild to begin on him!"

"You have not yet answered my question," said the old gentleman gravely. "Do you lack the courage to marry him if it becomes necessary to

do so in order to devote your entire life to studying him?"

"Oh—it *cannot* be necessary——"

"You lack the courage."

She was silent.

"Braver things have been done by those of your profession who have gone among lepers," said the old gentleman sadly.

She flushed up instantly; her eyes sparkled; her head proudly high, delicate nostrils dilated.

"I am not afraid!" she said. "If it ever becomes necessary, I *can* show courage and devotion, as well as those of my profession who minister to the lepers of Molokai! Yes; I do promise you to marry him if I cannot otherwise study him. And I promise you solemnly to devote my entire life to observing his symptoms and searching for proper means to combat them. My one ambition in life is personally to observe and study a case of Lamour's Disease, and to give my entire life to investigating its origin, its course, and its cure."

The old gentleman rose, bowing with that quaintly obsolete courtesy which was in vogue in his youth.

"I am contented to leave him exclusively to you, Dr. Hollis. And I wish you happiness in your

life's work—and success in your cure of this unhappy young man."

Hat in hand, he bowed again as he tottered past her, muttering and smiling to himself and shaking his trembling head as he went rocking on unsteady legs out into the sunshine, where the nursemaids and children flocked along the lake shore throwing peanuts to the waterfowl and satiated goldfish.

Dr. Hollis looked after him, her small hand buried among the pages of her open book. Carden viewed his disappearing figure with guileless emotions. He was vaguely aware that something important was about to happen to him. And it did before he was prepared.

CHAPTER XXIII

When Rosalind Hollis found herself on her feet again a slight sensation of fright checked her for a moment. Then, resolutely suppressing such unworthy weakness, the lofty inspiration of her mission in life dominated her, and she stepped forward undaunted. And Carden, seeing her advance toward him, arose in astonishment to meet her.

For a second they stood facing each other, he astounded, she a trifle pale but firm. Then in a low voice she asked his pardon for disturbing him.

"I am Rosalind Hollis, a physician," she said quietly, "and physicians are sometimes obliged to do difficult things in the interest of their profession. It is dreadfully difficult for me to speak to you in this way. But"—she looked fearlessly at him—"I am confident you will not misinterpret what I have done."

He managed to assure her that he did not misinterpret it.

She regarded him steadily; she examined the dark circles under his eyes; she coolly observed his rising color under her calm inspection; she saw him

fidgeting with his walking stick. She *must* try his pulse!

"Would you mind if I asked you a few questions in the interest of science?" she said earnestly.

"As a m-m-matter of fact," he stammered, "I don't know much about science. Awfully glad to do anything I can, you know."

"Oh, I don't mean it that way," she reassured him. A hint of a smile tinted her eyes with brilliant amethyst. "Would you mind if I sat here for a few moments? *Could* you overlook this horrid unconventionality long enough for me to explain why I have spoken to you?"

"I could indeed!" he said, so anxiously cordial that her lovely face grew serious and she hesitated. But he was standing aside, hat off, placing the bench at her disposal, and she seated herself, placing her book on the bench beside her.

"Would you mind sitting here for a few moments?" she asked him gravely.

Dazed, scarcely crediting the evidence of his senses, he took possession of the end of the bench with the silent obedience of a schoolboy. His attitude was irreproachable. She was grateful for this, and her satisfaction with herself for not having misjudged him renewed her confidence in him, in herself, and in the difficult situation.

"'Would you mind sitting here for a few moments?'"

She began, quietly, by again telling him her name and profession; where she lived, and that she was studying to be a specialist, though she did not intimate what that specialty was to be.

Outwardly composed and attentively deferential, his astonishment at times dominated a stronger sentiment that seemed to grow and expand with her every word, seizing him in a fierce possession absolutely and hopelessly complete.

The bewildering fascination of her mastered him. No cool analysis of what his senses were confirming could be necessary to convince him of his condition. Every word of hers, every gesture, every inflection of her sweet, clear voice, every lifting of her head, her eyes, her perfectly gloved hands, only repeated to him what he knew was a certainty. Never had he looked upon such physical loveliness; never had he dreamed of such a voice.

She had asked him a question, and, absorbed in the pure delight of looking at her, he had not comprehended or answered. She flushed sensitively, accepting his silence as refusal, and he came out of his trance hastily.

"I beg your pardon; I did not quite understand your question, Miss Hollis—I mean, Dr. Hollis."

"I asked you if you minded my noting your pulse," she said.

He stretched out his right hand; she stripped off her glove, laid the tip of her middle finger on his wrist, and glanced down at the gold watch which she held.

"I am wondering," he said, laughing uncertainly, "whether you believe me to be ill. Of course it is easy to see that you have found something unusual about me—something of particular interest to a physician. Is there anything very dreadful going to happen to me, Dr. Hollis? I feel perfectly well."

"Are you sure you feel well?" she asked, so earnestly that the smile on his lips faded out.

"Absolutely. Is my pulse queer?"

"It is not normal."

He could easily account for that, but he said nothing.

She questioned him for a few minutes, noted his pulse again, looked closely at the bluish circles under his eyes. Naturally he flushed up and grew restless under the calm, grave, beautiful eyes.

"I—I have an absolutely new and carefully sterilized thermometer—" She drew it from a tiny gold-initialed pocket case, and looked wistfully at him.

"You want to put that into my mouth?" he asked, astonished.

"If you don't mind."

She held it up, shook it once or twice, and deliberately inserted it between his lips. And there he sat, round-eyed, silent, the end of the thermometer protruding at a rakish angle from the corner of his mouth. And he grew redder and redder.

"I *don't* wish to alarm you," she was saying, "but all this is so deeply significant, so full of vital interest to me—to the world, to science——"

"*What* have I got, in Heaven's name?" he said thickly, the thermometer wiggling in his mouth.

"Ah!" she exclaimed with soft enthusiasm, clasping her pretty ungloved hands, "I cannot be sure yet—I dare not be too sanguine——"

"Do you mean that you *want* me to have something queer?" he blurted out, while the thermometer wiggled with every word he uttered.

"N-no, of course, I don't *want* you to be ill," she said hastily. "Only, if you *are* ill it will be a wonderful thing for me. I mean—a—that I am intensely interested in certain symptoms which——"

She gently withdrew the glass tube from his lips and examined it carefully.

"*Is* there anything the matter?" he insisted, looking at the instrument over her shoulder.

She did not reply; pure excitement rendered her speechless.

"I seem to *feel* all right," he added uneasily. "If you really believe that there's anything wrong with me, I'll stop in to see my doctor."

"Your doctor!" she repeated, appalled.

"Yes, certainly. Why not?"

"Don't do that! Please don't do that! I—why *I* discovered this case. I beg you most earnestly to let me observe it. You don't understand the importance of it! You don't begin to dream of the rarity of this case! How much it means to me!"

He flushed up. "Do you intend to intimate that I am afflicted with some sort of rare and s-s-trange d-d-disease?" he stammered.

"I dare not pronounce upon it too confidently," she said with enthusiasm; "I have not yet absolutely determined the nature of the disease. But, oh, I am beginning to hope——"

"Then I *am* diseased!" he faltered. "I've got *something* anyhow; is that it? Only you are not yet perfectly sure what it is called! Is that the truth, Miss Hollis?"

"How can I answer positively until I have had time to observe these symptoms? It requires time to be certain. I do not wish to alarm you, but it is my duty to say to you that you should

immediately place yourself under medical observation."

"You think that?"

"I do; I am convinced of it. Please understand me; I do not pronounce upon these visible symptoms; I do not express an unqualified opinion; but I could be in a position to do so if you consent to place yourself under my observations and care. For these suspicious symptoms are not only very plainly apparent to me, but were even noted by that old gentleman whom you may perhaps have observed conversing with me."

"Yes, I saw him. Who is he?"

"Dr. Austin Atwood," said the girl solemnly.

"Oh! And you say he also observed something queer about me? What did he see? Are there spots on me? Am I turning any remarkable color? Am I—" And in the very midst of his genuine alarm he suddenly remembered the make-up box and what the Tracer of Lost Persons had done to his eyes. Was *that* it? Where was the Tracer, anyway? He had promised to appear. And then Carden recollected the gray wig and whiskers that the Tracer had waved at him from the cupboard, bidding him note them well. *Could* that beaming, benignant, tottering old gentleman have been the Tracer of Lost Persons himself? And the same

instant Carden was sure of it, spite of the miraculous change in the man.

Then logic came to his aid; and, deducing with care and patience, an earnest conviction grew within him that the dark circles under his eyes and the tottering old gentleman resembling Dr. Austin Atwood had a great deal to do with this dreadful disease which Dr. Hollis desired to study.

He looked at the charming girl beside him, and she looked back at him very sweetly, very earnestly, awaiting his decision.

For a moment he realized that she had really scared him, and in the reaction of relief an overwhelming desire to laugh seized him. He managed to suppress it, to compose himself. Then he remembered the Tracer's admonition to acquiesce in everything, do what he was told to do, not to run away, and to pay his court at the first decent opportunity.

He had no longer any desire to escape; he was quite willing to do anything she desired.

"Do you really want to study me, Dr. Hollis?" he asked, feeling like a hypocrite.

"Indeed I do," she replied fervently.

"You believe me worth studying?"

"Oh, truly, truly, you are! You don't suspect

—you cannot conceive how important you have suddenly become to me."

"Then I think you had better take my case, Dr. Hollis," he said seriously. "I begin now to realize that you believe me to be a sort of freak—an afflicted curiosity, and that, in the interest of medicine, I ought to go to an asylum or submit myself to the ceaseless observation of a competent private physician."

"I—I think it best for you to place yourself in my care," she said. "Will you?"

"Yes," he said, "I will. I'll do anything in the world you ask."

"That is very—very generous, very noble of you!" she exclaimed, flushing with excitement and delight. "It means a great deal to me—it means, perhaps, a fame that I scarcely dared dream of even in my most enthusiastic years. I am too grateful to express my gratitude coherently; I am trying to say to you that I thank you; that I recognize in you those broad, liberal, generous qualities which, from your appearance and bearing, I—I thought perhaps you must possess."

She colored again very prettily; he bowed, and ventured to remind her that she had not yet given him the privilege of naming himself.

"That is true!" she said, surprised. "I had

quite forgotten it." But when he named himself she raised her head, startled.

"Victor Carden!" she repeated. "You are the *artist*, Victor Carden!"

"Yes," he said, watching her dilated eyes like two violet-tinted jewels.

For a minute she sat looking at him; and imperceptibly a change came into her face, and its bewildering beauty softened as the vivid tints died out, leaving her cheeks almost pale.

"It is—a pity," she said under her breath. All the excitement, all the latent triumph, all the scarcely veiled eager enthusiasm had gone from her now.

"A pity?" he repeated, smiling.

"Yes. I wish it had been only an ordinary man. I—why should this happen to you? You have done so much for us all—made us forget ourselves in the beauty of what you offer us. Why should this happen to *you!*"

"But you have not told me yet what has happened to me, Miss Hollis."

She looked up, almost frightened.

"*Are* you our Victor Carden? I do not wish to believe it! You have done so much for the world—you have taught us to understand and desire all that is noble and upright and clean and beautiful!

—to desire it, to aspire toward it, to venture to live the good, true, wholesome lives that your penciled creations must lead—*must* lead to wear such beautiful bodies and such divine eyes!"

"Do *you* care for my work?" he asked, astonished and moved.

"I? Yes, of course I do. Who does not?"

"Many," he replied simply.

"I am sorry for them," she said.

They sat silent for a long while.

At first his overwhelming desire was to tell her of the deception practiced upon her; but he could not do that, because in exposing himself he must fail in loyalty to the Tracer of Lost Persons. Besides, she would not believe him. She would think him mad if he told her that the old gentleman she had taken for Dr. Atwood was probably Mr. Keen, the Tracer of Lost Persons. Also, he himself was not absolutely certain about it. He had merely deduced as much.

"Tell me," he said very gently, "what is the malady from which you believe I am suffering?"

For a moment she remained silent, then, face averted, laid her finger on the book beside her.

"That," she said unsteadily.

He read aloud: "Lamour's Disease. A Treatise

in sixteen volumes by Ero S. Lamour, M.D., M.S., F.B.A., M.F.H."

"All that?" he asked guiltily.

"I don't know, Mr. Carden. Are you laughing at me? Do you not believe me?" She had turned suddenly to confront him, surprising a humorous glimmer in his eyes.

"I really do not believe I am seriously ill," he said, laughing in spite of her grave eyes.

"Then perhaps you had better read a little about what Lamour describes as the symptoms of this malady," she said sadly.

"Is it fatal?" he inquired.

"Ultimately. That is why I desire to spend my life in studying means to combat it. That is why I desire you so earnestly to place yourself under my observation and let me try."

"Tell me one thing," he said; "is it contagious? Is it infectious? No? Then I don't mind your studying me all you wish, Dr. Hollis. You may take my temperature every ten minutes if you care to. You may observe my pulse every five minutes if you desire. Only please tell me how this is to be accomplished; because, you see, I live in the Sherwood Studio Building, and you live on Madison Avenue."

"I—I have a ward—a room—fitted up with

every modern surgical device — every improvement," she said. "It adjoins my office. *Would* you mind living there for a while—say for a week at first—until I can be perfectly certain in my diagnosis?"

"Do you intend to put me to bed?" he asked, appalled.

"Oh, no! Only I wish to watch you carefully and note your symptoms from moment to moment. I also desire to try the effects of certain medicines on you——"

"What kind of medicines?" he asked uneasily.

"I cannot tell yet. Perhaps antitoxin; I don't know; perhaps formalin later. Truly, Mr. Carden, this case has taken on a graver, a more intimate significance since I have learned who you are. I would have worked hard to save any life; I shall put my very heart and soul into my work to save you, who have done so much for us all."

The trace of innocent emotion in her voice moved him.

"I am really not ill," he said unsteadily. "I cannot let you think I am——"

"Don't speak that way, Mr. Carden. I—I am perfectly miserable over it; I don't feel any happiness in my discovery now—not the least bit. I had rather live my entire life without seeing one

case of Lamour's Disease than to believe you are afflicted with it."

"But I'm not, Miss Hollis!—really, I am not——"

She looked at him compassionately for a moment, then rose.

"It is best that you should be informed as to your probable condition," she said. "In Lamour's works, volume nine, you had better read exactly what Lamour says. Do you mind coming to the office with me, Mr. Carden?"

"Now?"

"Yes. The book is there. Do you mind coming?"

"No—no, of course not." And, as they turned away together under the trees: "You don't intend to begin observing me this afternoon, do you?" he ventured.

"I think it best if you can arrange your affairs. Can you, Mr. Carden?"

"Why, yes, I suppose I can. Did you mean for me to begin to occupy that surgical bedroom at once?"

"Do you mind?"

"N-no. I'll telephone my servants to pack a steamer trunk and send it around to your apartment this evening. And—where am I to board?"

"I have a dining room," she said simply. "My apartment consists of the usual number of servants and rooms, including my office, and my observation ward which you will occupy."

He walked on, troubled.

"I only w-want to ask one or two things, Dr. Hollis. Am I to be placed on a diet? I hate diets!"

"Not at once."

"May I smoke?"

"Certainly," she said, smiling.

"And you won't p-put me—send me to bed too early?"

"Oh, no! The later you sit up the better, because I shall wish to take your temperature every ten minutes and I shall feel very sorry to arouse you."

"You mean you are coming in to wake me up every ten minutes and put that tube in my mouth?" he asked, aghast.

"Only every half-hour, Mr. Carden. Can't you stand it for a week?"

"Well," he said, "I—I suppose I can if *you* can. Only, upon my honor, there is really nothing the matter with me, and I'll prove it to you out of your own book."

"I wish you could, Mr. Carden. I should be only too happy to give you back to the world with

a clear bill of health if you can convince me I am wrong. Do you not believe me? Indeed, indeed I am not selfish and wicked enough to wish you this illness, no matter how rare it is!"

"The rarer a disease is the madder it makes people who contract it," he said. "I should be the maddest man in Manhattan if I really did have Lamour's malady. But I haven't. There is only one malady afflicting me, and I am waiting for a suitable opportunity to tell you all about it, but——"

"Tell me now," she said, raising her eyes to his.

"Not now."

"To-night?"

"I hope so. I will if I can, Miss Hollis."

"But you must not fear to tell a physician about anything which troubles you, Mr. Carden."

"I'll remember that," he said thoughtfully, as they emerged from the Park and crossed to Madison Avenue.

A moment later he hailed a car and they both entered.

CHAPTER XXIV

No, there could be no longer any doubt in her mind as she went into her bedroom, closed the door, and, unhooking the telephone receiver, called up the great specialist in rare diseases, Dr. Austin Atwood, M.S., F.B.A., M.F.H.

"Dr. Atwood," she said with scarcely concealed emotion, "this is Dr. Rosalind Hollis."

"How-de-do?" squeaked the aged specialist amiably.

"Oh, I am well enough, thank you, doctor—except in spirits. Dr. Atwood, you were right! He *has* got it, and I am perfectly wretched!"

"*Who* has got *what?*" retorted the voice of Atwood.

"The unfortunate young gentleman we saw today in the Park——"

"What park?"

"Why, Central Park, doctor——"

"Central Park! *I* haven't been in Central Park for ten years, my child."

"Why, Dr. Atwood!—A—*is* this Dr. Austin Atwood with whom I am talking?"

"Not the least doubt! And you are that pretty Dr. Hollis—Rosalind Hollis, who consulted me in those charity cases, are you not?"

"I certainly am. And I wanted to say to you that I have the unfortunate patient now under closest observation here in my own apartment. I have given him the room next to the office. And, doctor, you were perfectly right. He shows every symptom of the disease—he is even inclined to sentimentalism; he begins to blush and fidget and look at me—a—in that unmistakable manner—not that he isn't well-bred and charming—indeed he is most attractive, and it grieves me dreadfully to see that he already is beginning to believe himself in love with the first person of the opposite sex he encounters—I mean that he—that I cannot mistake his attitude toward me—which is perfectly correct, only one cannot avoid seeing the curious infatuation——"

"*What* the dickens is all this?" roared the great specialist, and Dr. Hollis jumped.

"I was only confirming your diagnosis, doctor," she explained meekly.

"What diagnosis?"

"Yours, doctor. I have confirmed it, I fear. And the certainty has made me perfectly miserable, because his is such a valuable life to the world,

and he himself is such a splendid, wholesome, noble specimen of youth and courage, that I cannot bear to believe him incurably afflicted."

"Good Heavens!" shouted the doctor, "*what* has he got and *who* is he?"

"He is Victor Carden, the celebrated artist, and he has Lamour's Disease!" she gasped.

There was a dead silence; then: "Keep him there until I come! Chloroform him if he attempts to escape!"

And the great specialist rang off excitedly.

So Rosalind Hollis went back to the lamp-lit office where, in a luxurious armchair, Carden was sitting, contentedly poring over the ninth volume of Lamour's great treatise and smoking his second cigar.

"Dr. Atwood is coming here," she said in a discouraged voice, as he rose with alacrity to place her chair.

"Oh! What for?"

"T-to see you, Mr. Carden."

"Who? Me? Great Scott! I don't want to be slapped and pinched and polled by a man! I didn't expect that, you know. I'm willing enough to have you observe me in the interest of humanity——"

"But, Mr. Carden, he is only called in for con-

sultation. I—I have a dreadful sort of desperate hope that perhaps I may have made a mistake; that possibly I am in error."

"No doubt you are," he said cheerfully. "Let me read a few more pages, Dr. Hollis, and then I think I shall be all ready to dispute my symptoms, one by one, and convince you what really is the trouble with me. And, by the way, did Dr. Atwood seem a trifle astonished when you told him about me?"

"A trifle—yes," she said uncertainly. "He is a very, very old man; he forgets. But he is coming."

"Oh! And didn't he appear to recollect seeing me in the Park?"

"N-not clearly. He is very old, you know. But he is coming here."

"*Ex*actly—as a friend of mine puts it," smiled Carden. "May I be permitted to use your telephone a moment?"

"By all means, Mr. Carden. You will find it there in my bedroom."

So he entered her pretty bedroom and, closing the door tightly, called up the Tracer of Lost Persons.

"Is that you, Mr. Keen? This is Mr. Carden. I'm head over heels in love. I simply must win

her, and I'm going to try. If I don't—if she will not listen to me—I'll certainly go to smash. And what I want you to do is to prevent Atwood from butting in. Do you understand? . . . Yes, Dr. Austin Atwood. Keep him away somehow. . . . Yes, I'm here, at Dr. Hollis's apartments, under anxious observation. . . . She is the *only* woman in the world! I'm mad about her—and getting madder every moment! She is the most perfectly splendid specimen of womanhood—*what?* Oh, yes; I rang you up to ask you whether it was *you* in the Park to-day?—that old gentleman—*What!* Yes, in Central Park. Yes, this afternoon! No, he didn't resemble you; and Dr. Hollis took him for Dr. Atwood. . . . What are you laughing about? . . . I can *hear* you laughing. . . . *Was* it you? . . . What do I think? Why, I don't know exactly what to think, but I suppose it must have been you. Was it? . . . Oh, I see. You don't wish me to know. Certainly, you are quite right. Your clients have no business behind the scenes. I only asked out of curiosity. . . . All right. Good-by."

He came back to the lamp-lit office, which was more of a big, handsome, comfortable living room than a physician's quarters, and for a moment or two he stood on the threshold, looking around.

In the pleasant, subdued light of the lamp Rosalind Hollis looked up and around, smiling involuntarily to see him standing there; then, serious, silent, she dropped her eyes to the pages of the volume he had discarded—volume nine of Lamour's great works.

Even with the evidence before her, corroborated in these inexorably scientific pages which she sat so sadly turning, she found it almost impossible to believe that this big, broad-shouldered, attractive young man could be fatally stricken.

Twice her violet eyes stole toward him; twice the thick lashes veiled them, and the printed pages on her knee sprang into view, and the cold precision of the type confirmed her fears remorselessly:

"The trained scrutiny of the observer will detect in the victim of this disease a peculiar and indefinable charm—a strange symmetry which, on closer examination, reveals traces of physical beauty almost superhuman——"

Again her eyes were lifted to Carden; again she dropped her white lids. Her worst fears were confirmed.

Meanwhile he stood on the threshold looking at her, his pulses racing, his very soul staring through his eyes; and, within him, every sense

clamoring out revolt at the deception, demanding confession and its penalty.

"I can't stand this!" he blurted out; and she looked up quickly, her face blanched with foreboding.

"Are you in pain?" she asked.

"No—not that sort of pain! I—*won't* you please believe that I am not ill? I'm imposing on you. I'm an impostor! There's nothing whatever the trouble with me except—something that I want to tell you—if you'll let me——"

"Why should you hesitate to confide in a physician, Mr. Carden?"

He came forward slowly. She laid her small hand on the empty chair which faced hers and he sank into it, clasping his restless hands under his chin.

"You are feeling depressed," she said gently. Depression was a significant symptom. Three chapters were devoted to it.

"I'm depressed, of course. I'm horribly depressed and ashamed of myself, because there is nothing on earth the matter with me, and I've let you think there is."

She smiled mournfully; this was another symptom of a morbid state. She turned, unconsciously, to page 379 to verify her observation.

"See here, Miss Hollis," he broke out, "haven't I any chance to convince you that I am not ill? I want to be honest without involving a—a friend of mine. I can't endure this deception. Won't you let me prove to you that these symptoms are—are only significant of something else?"

She looked straight at him, considering him in silence.

"Let us begin with those dark circles under my eyes," he said desperately. "I found some cold-cream in my room and—look! They are practically gone! At any rate, if there is a sort of shadow left it's because I use my eyes in my profession."

"Dr. Lamour says that the dark circles disappear, anyway," said the girl, unconvinced. "Cold-cream had nothing to do with it."

"But it *did*! Really it did. And as for the other symptoms, I—well, I can't help my pulses when y-you t-t-touch me."

"Please, Mr. Carden."

"I don't mean to be impertinent. I am trying my hardest to tell the truth. And my pulses *do* gallop when you test them; they're galloping now! This very moment!"

"Let me try them," she said coolly, laying her hand on his wrist.

"Didn't I say so!" he insisted grimly. "And I'm turning red, too. But those symptoms mean something else; they mean *you*!"

"Mr. Carden!"

"I can't help saying so——"

"I know it," she said soothingly; "these sentimental outbursts are part of the disease——"

"Good Heavens! *Won't* you try to believe me! There's nothing in the world the matter with me except that I am—am—p-p-perfectly f-f-fascinated——"

"You must struggle against it, Mr. Carden. That is only part of the——"

"It isn't! It isn't! It's you! It's your mere presence, your personality, your charm, your beauty, your loveliness, your——"

"Mr. Carden, I beg of you! I—it is part of my duty to observe symptoms, but—but you are making it very hard for me—very difficult——"

"I am only proving to you that it isn't Lamour's Disease which does stunts with my pulses, my temperature, my color. I'm not morbid except when I realize my deception. I'm not depressed except when I think how far you are from me—how far above me—how far out of reach of such a man as I am—how desperately I—I——"

"D-don't you think I had better administer a s-s-sedative, Mr. Carden?" she said, distressed.

"I don't care. I'll take anything you give me —as long as *you* give it to me. I'll swallow pint after pint of pills! I'll fletcherize 'em! I'll luxuriate in poison—anything——"

She was hastily running through the pages of the ninth volume to see whether the symptoms of sentimental excitement ever turned into frenzy.

"What can you learn from that book?" he insisted, leaning forward to see what she was reading. "Anyway, Dr. Lamour married his patient so early in the game that all the symptoms disappeared. And I believe the trouble with his patient was my trouble. She had every symptom of it until he married her! She was in love with him, that is absolutely all!"

Rosalind Hollis raised her beautiful, incredulous eyes.

"What do you mean, Mr. Carden?"

"I mean that, in my opinion, there's no such disease as Lamour's Disease. That young girl was in love with him. Then he married her at last, and —presto!—all the symptoms vanished—the pulse, the temperature, the fidgets, the blushes, the moods, the whole business!"

"W-what about the strangely curious manifes-

tations of physical beauty — superhuman symmetry, Mr. Carden? "

"Do you notice them in *me*?" he gasped.

"A—yes—in a m-modified measure——"

"In *me*?"

"Certainly!" she said firmly; but the slow glow suffusing her cheeks was disconcerting her. Then his own face began to reflect the splendid color in hers; their eyes met, dismayed.

"There are sixteen volumes about this disease," she said. "There *must* be such a disease!"

"There is," he said. "I have it badly. But I never had it before I first saw you in the Park!"

"Mr. Carden—this is the wildest absurdity——"

"I know it. Wildness is a symptom. I'm mad as a hatter. I've got every separate symptom, and I wish it was infectious and contagious and catching and fatal!"

She made an effort to turn the pages to the chapter entitled "Manias and Illusions," but he laid his hand across the book and his clear eyes defied her.

"Mr. Carden——"

Her smooth hand trembled under his, then, suddenly nerveless, relaxed. With an effort she lifted her head; their eyes met, spellbound.

"*You* have *every* symptom," he said unsteadily —"every one! What have you to say?"

Her fascinated eyes held his.

"What have you to say?" he repeated under his breath—"you, with every symptom, and your heavenly radiant beauty to confirm them—that splendid youthful loveliness which blinds and stuns me as I look—as I speak—as I tell you that I love you. That is my malady; that is the beginning and the end of it; love!"

She sat speechless, immovable, as one under enchantment.

"All my life," he said, "I have spent in painting shadows. But the shadows were those dim celestial shapes cast by your presence in the world. You tell me that the world is better for my work; that I have offered my people beauty and a sort of truth, which they had never dreamed of until I revealed it? Yet what inspired me was the shadow only, for I had never seen the substance; I had never believed I should ever see the living source of the shadows which inspired me. And now I see; now I have seen with my own eyes. Now the confession of faith is no longer a blind creed, born of instinct. You live! You are you! What I believed from necessity I find proved in fact. The occult no longer can sway one who has seen. And

you, who, without your knowledge or mine, have always been the one and only source of any good in me or in my work—why is it strange that I loved you at first sight?—that I worshiped you at first breath?—I, who, like him who raises his altar to 'the unknown god,' raised my altar to truth and beauty? And a miracle has answered me."

She rose, the beautiful dazed eyes meeting his, both hands clasping the ninth volume of Lamour's great monograph to her breast as though to protect it from him—from him who was threatening her, enthralling her, thrilling her with his magic voice, his enchanted youth, the masterful mystery of his eyes. What was he saying to her? What was this mounting intoxication sweeping her senses—this delicious menace threatening her very will? What did he want with her? What was he asking? What was he doing now—with both her hands in his, and her gaze deeply lost in his—and the ninth volume of Lamour on the floor between them, sprawling there, abandoned, waving its helpless, discredited leaves in air—discredited, abandoned, obsolete as her own specialty—her life's work! He had taken that, too—taken her life's work from her. And in return she was holding nothing!—nothing except a young man's hands—strong, muscular hands which, after all, were

holding her own imprisoned. So she had nothing in exchange for the ninth volume of Lamour; and her life's work had been annihilated by a smile; and she was very much alone in the world—very isolated and very youthful.

After a while she emerged from the chaos of attempted reflection and listened to what he was saying. He spoke very quietly, very distinctly, not sparing himself, laying bare every deception without involving anybody except himself.

He told her the entire history of his case, excluding Mr. Keen in person; he told her about his aunt, about his birthday, about his determination to let the legacy go. Then in a very manly way he told her that he had never before loved a woman; and fell silent, her hands a dead weight in his.

She was surprised that she could experience no resentment. A curious inertia crept over her. She was tired of expectancy, tired of effort, weary of the burden of decision. Life and its problems overweighted her. Her eyes wandered to his broad young shoulders, then were raised to his face.

"What shall we do?" she asked innocently.

Unresisting, she suffered him to explain. His explanation was not elaborate; he only touched his lips to her hands and straightened up, a trifle pale.

After a moment they walked together to the door and he took his hat and gloves from the rack.

"Will you come to-morrow morning?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Come early. I am quite certain of how matters are with me. Everything has gone out of my life—everything I once cared for—all the familiar things. So come early, for I am quite alone without you."

"And I without you, Rosalind."

"That is only right," she said simply. "I shall cast no more shadows for you. . . . Are you going? . . . Oh, I know it is best that you should go, but——"

He halted. She laid both hands in his.

"We both have it," she faltered—"every symptom. And—you will come early, won't you?"

THE END

(1)